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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,  
FIRST INSTALLMENT: 9 AUGUST 1960 TO 31 JANUARY 1961  
(Revised Version)

HISTORICAL DIVISION  
JOINT SECRETARIAT  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
27 FEBRUARY 1961

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23 April 1961

NOTICE OF REVISION

Due to the accession of additional material  
this document has been revised as of this date by the  
substitution of pages 94 - 110 for the original pages  
94 - 98.



S. W. HOMER  
Colonel, Artillery  
Chief

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(Revised)

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INTRODUCTION

"Laos is a peaceful country and the Lao people are dedicated to peace; yet Laos for more than twenty years has known neither peace nor security." Thus did the Laotian King Savang Vathana describe the anomaly that is Laos today. A nation with scant natural or human resources, Laos has been the scene of continual skirmishing between East and West. In the struggle for Laos, both power blocs seek the realization of distinct political and military objectives. Moreover, on the ideological plane, victory in Laos would be symbolic of ascendancy in Southeast Asia, in this manner, the contest in Laos becomes a "play-within-the-play" in the world struggle. To the victor in Laos might accrue successes grossly disproportionate to the political domination of this diminutive jungle kingdom. Understandably, therefore, the US Government, in its national policy on Laos, has manifested continuing concern about the Communist threat to Laos, and has been designed to prevent Communist domination of the kingdom.

In 1954, the national policy promulgated the following courses of action concerning Laos:

- 1) Make every possible effort, not openly inconsistent with the U.S. position as to the armistice agreements, to defeat Communist subversion and influence, to maintain and support friendly non-Communist [government] in. . . Laos. . .
- 2) Urge that the French promptly recognize and deal with. . . Laos. . . as [an] independent sovereign [nation].
- 3) Strengthen U.S. representation and deal directly, wherever advantageous to the U.S., with the [government] of . . . Laos, . . .
- 4) Working through the French only insofar as necessary, assist Laos. . . to maintain (1) military forces necessary for internal security and (2) economic conditions conducive to the maintenance and strength of non-Communist areas
- 5) Expose Communist violations of the Armistice in Indochina.
- 6) Conduct covert operations on the maximum feasible<sub>1</sub> and productive scale in support of the foregoing policies

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1. (TS) NSC 5429/5, 22 Dec 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 90.

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In the next few years, Laos failed to achieve stability - a stability earnestly sought by the US. The US responded to this unsettled condition by accelerating the tempo of its efforts in Laos. On 5 September 1956 the policy approved for Laos provided that the US would:

- 1) Seek to strengthen the determination of the Royal Government to resist subversion and to maintain its independence.
- 2) In order to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-Communism encourage individuals and groups in Laos who oppose dealing with the Communist bloc.
- 3) Develop an attitude of confidence on the part of Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and U.S. support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements.
- 4) Encourage and support close bonds between Laos and Thailand, including such political associations, economic cooperation, and joint military planning as feasible.
- 5) Support the expansion and reorganization of police, propaganda, and army intelligence services, provided anti-Communist elements maintain effective control of these services.
- 6) Continue support of the Royal Lao Army to assure internal security and provide limited initial resistance to an attack by the Viet Minh.
- 7) Terminate economic and military aid if the Lao Government ceases to demonstrate a will to resist internal Communist subversion and to carry out a policy of maintaining its independence.

In 1958 US policy remained virtually unchanged. Only minor changes were made, and these modifications were included in the NSC policy on Laos for 1960.

The basic US policy toward Laos prevailing at the time of the August coup provided that the US would:

- 1) Provide military assistance for the development and support of Lao armed forces capable of maintaining internal security against Communist subversion or other elements hostile to U.S. interests and providing limited initial resistance to Communist aggression. Encourage Laos to formulate and implement a broadly conceived security plan, including both internal and external security, which encompasses the services of all branches of the Royal Government, civil and military.

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1. (12) NSC 5612/1, dtd 5 Sep 56. CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48)  
(2), sec 26, BP Pt 6.

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2) In the provision of U.S. assistance, direct our programs to the promotion of social and economic progress and unification of Laos, thus helping maintain the confidence of the Royal Government in its anti-Communist, pro-Free World 'neutrality.'

3) Continue to promote conditions engendering confidence by Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and Free World support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements, and at the same time continue to impress upon the Lao the need for a sense of responsibility and recognition that too drastic actions may have adverse international implications.

4) Encourage the Lao to observe constitutional and legal processes as providing the soundest basis for the growth and vitality of democratic institutions; discourage resort to force in political affairs.

5) Encourage the Lao Government to give emphasis to programs tending to reorient disaffected elements of the population.

6) Encourage and support cooperation between Laos and other Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Malaya, and Burma, including such joint effort in the anti-subversion, economic, communications, and military fields as is feasible.

7) Develop greater mutual understanding and cooperation with the French in the furtherance of common Free World objectives.

8) Strongly support 'the UN presence' and expanded UN technical assistance in Laos, and make a special intensified effort to encourage other friendly nations to assume a larger share of responsibility for the support of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) 1954-1960

The Geneva Accords did little to allay US fears that the Laotian Army, in the post-Geneva years, would provide neither an effective agency for internal security nor an adequate deterrent to Viet Minh aggression. Following the Geneva Conference, the French continued to furnish military advice to Laos, although the French Military Mission (FMM), reduced in strength, ceased assigning personnel to train the combat arms of the FAL. It soon became apparent that additional assistance was necessary if the Laotian Army was to develop into a capable fighting force. The US initiated such military aid through the US Operations Mission (USOM). The USOM, organized in January, 1955, as a mechanism of the US Country Team to administer the US dollar-aid program, was

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1. (TS) NSC 6012, 9150/9105 (11 July 60), 25 Jul 60.

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now charged with the additional assignment of providing financial support for the Laotian military establishment.

It soon became apparent that the magnitude of the program required a separate organization. Late in 1955, therefore, the Programs Evaluation Office (PEO), an agency of the Department of Defense, was established, ostensibly as a section of the USOM but actually operating as a separate element of the US Country Team. The personnel of the PEO were all civilians, but, since their duties involved knowledge of military matters and equipment, the majority of them were reserve or retired military personnel. The PEO was occupied chiefly with the preparation of budgetary requests and the procurement of supplies. It paid the salaries of Laotian military personnel and furnished most of the military support to the armed forces of Laos, and carried out other activities designed to improve the economic and political situation in Laos. Perhaps the principal problem of the PEO was the difficulty experienced in its attempts to insure that US equipment was being put to proper use.

In December 1958, it was determined that the PEO should play a still more active role. Plans were made for augmenting the organization with military personnel in a covert role. CINCPAC recommended that an active duty general officer be assigned as Chief, PEO. Brig Gen John A. Heintges was assigned this task. Prior to assuming his new duty, Heintges was ordered by CINCPAC to survey the Laotian situation and propose a major reorganization of US military activities in Laos.

The conclusions of Gen. Heintges' survey provided a basis for a far reaching plan to: 1) reorganize the PEO by increasing its military personnel; 2) aid in training the FAL; and 3) improve the logistics of the armed forces in Laos.

To aid in training of the FAL, the plan envisioned: 1) providing personnel to form joint US/French teams to train each of the twelve regular ANL battalions; 2) assigning a field grade

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officer to each region headquarters to supervise the training teams; 3) activating a training center at Seno Air Base to train recruits and MOS specialists; 4) supplementing and complementing French training of the technical services; 5) providing US military training and advisory teams for specialized assistance in internal security training (special forces and PSYWAR); 6) increasing the Laotian quota at the U.S. Army Infantry School, to allow for 60 additional FAL representatives to take three months courses.

Since, however, operational training of the FAL was a responsibility of the French, these recommendations could be implemented only after coordination with the French government. On 29 May 59 the French concurred in the "Heintges Plan," as it was now called. The agreement stated that the special training team efforts would be in effect for from six months to a year, but it allowed for a review of this provision. (On 31 December 1959 CINCPAC recommended that the program be extended for another year.)

The "Heintges Plan" was forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, by CINCPAC on 13 December 1958, and at his suggestion, many of the proposals were adopted. In February, 1959, the now "Mister" Heintges assumed command of the PEO. His staff was reorganized and increased by nine US Army officers and eight NCO's traveling in civilian status. His recommendations for the improvement of logistical support of the FAL were taken under consideration by the Department of Defense, many were favorably acted upon in 1959. More important, all the proposals to improve the training of the FAL were adopted during 1959.

The new organization was just beginning to function in its expanded mission, including a more active logistic, advisory, and technical training role, when armed insurgency broke out in July 1959. The gravity of this situation and the consequent increase in the PEO workload resulted in a request for additional personnel. CINCPAC approved the request and warned the JCS that existing French and US efforts in training and logistics were not

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satisfactory in developing the FAL. Additional US advice and assistance were vital, CINCPAC stated, if deficiencies were to be corrected and the competence of the FAL increased to the standard required to meet the Communist challenge. He noted that while PEO had to be adequately staffed, the only long range solution would be the formal establishment of a MAAG.

On 17 February 1960 General Phoumi, the Laotian Minister of Defense, in a letter to the Chief PEO, requested a one year extension of US training effort in Laos.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for LAOS (ICC)

The Geneva Agreement ended the rebellion against the French in the territories that had been French Indochina, but could not end the contentions amongst the indigenes. It was necessary, therefore, to establish a continuing body to secure compliance with the terms of the agreements.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for Laos (soon dubbed ICC), comprised of India, Poland and Canada, was the instrument created for the supervision and implementation of the Geneva Agreements in that country. Under the terms of these agreements all Vietminh troops and all but a small, specified number of French troops were to be withdrawn from the country; moreover, Laos was barred from entering military alliances or accepting the establishment of foreign bases on its territory. The agreements also stipulated that the Pathet Lao forces were to withdraw to the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, which they were to administer in collaboration with the Royal Laotian Government. The agreements further stipulated, however, that before elections could be held in these provinces, the two factions must reach an accord on the political and military administration of the area.

By 19 November 1954 the ICC could report that all terms of the armistice agreements had been met with one exception: the question of the military and political administration of Sam Neua



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and Phong Saly remained unresolved. During the next year the Royal Government wavered between a policy of firmness advocated by the US and the policy of extreme caution advocated by France, the UK, and the ICC. After a long period of serious fighting and fruitless negotiations, the Government informed the ICC on 9 November 1955 that no agreement could be reached with the Pathet Lao, and that, therefore, the elections in Phong Saly and Sam Neua would have to be conducted without agreement. Because the authority of the Laotian Government had not been re-established in the two provinces, however, the National Assembly postponed the elections until December 1956.

By early 1956 the growing seriousness of the Pathet Lao rebellion, together with the mounting activity of the US in Laos, indicated that in future months Laos would occupy a crucial place in the politics of the cold war. The ICC for Laos tried to exert pressure on the Royal Government to avoid hostilities. But its influence on the Royal Government was seriously impaired by the attitude of the Commission members toward the Pathet Lao. The Polish member sided with the Pathet Lao in every dispute, and the Indian, reflecting Nehru's charitable approach to Asian neutralism, gave the Pathet Lao the benefit of every doubt. The Canadian, intent upon avoiding charges of favoritism, generally acceded to the Indian chairman. Often ignoring the most flagrant violations of the armistice by the Pathet Lao, the ICC tended to restrain the Royal Government on those rare occasions when it was considering more forceful action in the northern provinces.

An agreement between the PL and the RLG was finally reached on 19 November 1957. The authority of the Lao Government over the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly was recognized, and the integration of 1,500 Pathet Lao troops into the Laotian Army was arranged. The Government had been agitating for the removal of the ICC for some time; in May 1958, it announced that all its obligations under the Geneva Agreements had been fulfilled and

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that it would henceforth recognize the UN as the sole arbitratative body. The ICC advised the RLG that following the elections in May of 1958 its task in supervising the Geneva Agreements on Laos would be fulfilled. The ICC, however, adjourned on 19 July 1958, without legally dissolving. Thus, although its members left the country, it was not disestablished but merely suspended.

In the next two years several efforts were made to reconvene the commission. Following the North Vietnam-Laotian border violence in January 1959, the Laotian Government formally protested against an alleged occupation of part of its territory by North Vietnamese troops and requested that a UN observation mission be sent to the disputed area. In turn, in a letter of 25 January to the Indian Chairman of the ICC for Laos, North Vietnam protested against an alleged Laotian violation of the frontier. The letter also accused the RLG of an infringement of the Geneva Agreements by "repressive measures" against the Neo Lao Hak Xat and by large-scale importation of US arms. It requested a reconvention of the adjourned ICC.

In a note to the UK in March 1959 the USSR suggested that as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference they should request the ICC to resume its work of supervision and control as soon as possible. This request was seconded by Communist China who charged that, in threatening to resort to military means against the Pathet Lao, the RLG had committed a "serious violation" of the Geneva Agreements "tantamount to launching a civil war in Laos." The North Vietnamese Government similarly condemned the Laotian Government's action and demanded that the ICC return to Laos immediately. On 9 June 1959 the UK rejected the Soviet proposal. The RLG, said the UK, had consistently acted in accordance with the Geneva Agreements; the integration of the Pathet Lao troops in no way infringed the agreements.

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On 10 June 1960, precursory to his later actions (see item 14 Nov 60), Prime Minister Nehru called for the reconvening of the ICC. Describing the situation in Laos, Nehru said that some of the Indo-Chinese states had been subjected to "outside pulls" which had become "stronger on various sides" and had given rise to problems. The existence of the ICC, he charged would be "a sobering and balancing factor" in this situation. "Unfortunately for us, . . . we have accepted a certain responsibility in the Indo-Chinese States as chairman of the Commission," he continued, "and it is a difficult and embarrassing task; . . . the Government of India did not propose that the Commission should go against the will of the Laotian Government, but that advice should be given to that Government to agree to reconvene the Commission."<sup>1</sup>

No results followed from the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister, but in midsummer the situation came dramatically to a head. The Kong Le coup, which opens the following chronological summary of the last six months of Laotian history can only be considered in the context of past developments in the ICC, the PEO, and Basic US National Policy. As the following should convincingly prove, a strong causal nexus exists between recent Laotian history and the struggle of the power Blocs; a struggle in which the three skeins traced above play no little part.

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1. (U) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1959-1960, 10 June 1959.

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9 Aug

Captain Kong Le and his 2d Laotian Paratroop Battalion, supported by armored units, seized complete control of Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos. Pro-Western Premier Tiao Somsanith and other government and military leaders were in the royal capital, Luang Prabang at the time.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 229, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 10 Aug 60, 1.

9 Aug

The Secretary of State, Christian Herter, advised the US Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop G. Brown, that the policy of the US Government was "to assist in any feasible way" any "determined effort which [the] legitimate government under [the] King's direction might make to restore its authority." Therefore, the Secretary "would not wish in any way [to] complicate or have our friends complicate" any such attempt. The prospect of a "neutralist government . . . dedicated to another fruitless round of negotiations with Pathet Lao" appeared to Secretary Herter as one fraught with danger to the independence of Laos.

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 141, 9 Aug 60.

10 Aug

Kong Le's group, under the title of "High Command of the Revolution," established an Executive Committee headed by Kong Le to administer civil and military powers until a new government could be invested. In a radio broadcast, the paratroop captain stated his "most important goal" to be a "true neutral policy," and called for an end to Lao fighting Lao. He also advocated accepting assistance from all countries "for constructive projects." During 10 years of freedom, according to Kong Le, the Lao people had suffered injustices, misery, and maltreatment from a corrupt minority of political leaders who used foreign aid to enrich themselves. Foreign aid had also been used by the donors to exploit and enslave the Lao.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 268, 12 Aug 60 and 256, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 11 Aug 60, 3.

10 Aug

At a meeting in Bangkok General Phoumi Nosavan, Minister of Defense in the Somsanith Government and a staunch anti-Communist, revealed to an American Embassy officer his plans for military action to suppress the rebellion. Phoumi stated he planned an attack by paratroops to retake the Vientiane airport, followed by the employment of additional air-transported forces to "oust the revolutionary group." Phoumi's headquarters was to be in the town of Savannakhet.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 221, 10 Aug 60.

10 Aug

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to deliver the following message to Premier Somsanith:

My government . . . continues to support fully [the] legally constituted government of Laos. It considers rebellion an internal affair of Laos and is sure that, under his Majesty's leadership your government can restore peace to [the] Kingdom through quick and decisive action.

(The message was received by the Premier on 12 August, reportedly, with "great happiness.")

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 264, 12 Aug 60;

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 150, 10 Aug 60.

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12 Aug The following actions were approved by the State and Defense Departments to implement the US policy of support of the Royal Laotian Government:

1. Designation of two senior Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) liaison officers to Forces Armee Lao (FAL) commanders at Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. These officers were to process requests for logistical support, furnish intelligence, and carry on PEO functions as practicable.

2. Use of Military Assistance Program Materials in Thailand for support of Royal Laotian Government military operations.

3. Reinforce CAT aircraft (contract aircraft) at Bangkok. One or two aircraft would be immediately available to transport members of the Royal Laotian Government.

The JCS authorized CINCPAC to employ actions 1 and 2 as he deemed "responsive to the current situation."

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 161, 12 Aug 60;  
(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 981358, 12 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

12 Aug In a statement broadcast over a Hanoi station, the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Xat Party (NLHX), the political head of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, declared that its followers in Laos had avowed their full support of the coup staged in Vientiane by Kong Le.

The Party proposed that the forces of Kong Le's "revolutionary committee" and the Pathet Lao combine action to oppose all US "imperialist schemes." Further, the party suggested the formation of a coalition government composed of representatives of various nationalities and of "patriotic and progressive political parties."

NYT, 13 Aug 60, 4.

13 Aug In a Laotian National Assembly meeting, the majority of the members passed a vote of "no-confidence" in the Somsanith Government. (On the next day members of the National Assembly flew from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to report the vote to King Savang Vathana.)

NYT, 15 Aug 60, 1.

14 Aug In an appraisal of the Laotian situation for the JCS, CINCPAC made the following points:

1. By presenting himself as preferable to an outright Communist takeover or bloody civil war, the avowed neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma stood a good chance of capturing the Kong Le movement and using it as a means to seize power.

a. In view of Souvanna's record of favoring close relations with the Communist powers, his collaboration with the NLHX, and his opposition to the US training effort, he did not present a happy solution from the US point of view.

3. If Souvanna or someone "even worse" came to power, the US would "be confronted with a situation requiring reassessment of our current military policies."

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140045Z, 14 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

15 Aug Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, attributed the fall of the Somsanith Government to the following causes: 1) the constant fighting of Lao against Lao; 2) "irregularity of pay"; 3) alleged corruption in the handling of US aid; 4) improperly conducted elections; and 5) unnecessary provocation of the Pathet Lao through too close an alliance between the Somsanith regime and the West, lack of contact with Hanoi and Peiping, and exclusion of the NLHX representatives from the Assembly.

With regard to Phoumi Nosavan, the Ambassador felt that "despite genuine efforts by Phoumi to clean up corruption and improve army administration, and his definite program of civilian type assistance by the FAL to [the] population, Phoumi has become to many the symbol of purely military power, thought to be often abused, and thus far unsuccessful in achieving the Lao's main desire, namely, peace at home and with his neighbors! An effort by Phoumi to take control by force would certainly be opposed by Great Britain, France, and the U.N.; Cambodia would be antagonized, and the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists might intervene.

Therefore, concluded the Ambassador, "despite Phoumi's undoubted abilities and strong pro-Western attitude, it should be made unmistakably clear to him that [the] U.S. opposes any effort on his part at military effort [to] regain control of or split [the] country."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 288, 15 Aug 60.

15 Aug Premier Somsanith submitted his resignation, and the King asked Souvanna Phouma to form a new Government

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 290, 15 Aug 60.

17 Aug Souvanna's Cabinet was approved by the National Assembly. He himself took the portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Defense in addition to the Premiership.

Souvanna told the Assembly that his aim was to restore internal peace in Laos and to pursue a "really neutral" foreign policy while respecting all treaties Laos had signed with foreign countries. He stated that his country would accept aid from all countries if it were given "without strings." Laos, he added, would foster all existing good relations and would seek new friendships with other countries if they were not "enemies of Laos."

NYT, 17 Aug 60, 14; 18 Aug 60, 1.

17 Aug In a message to Ambassador Brown, Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon expressed dissatisfaction with the Souvanna Government, pointing out that it contained a known leftist, was weak and inexperienced, and was at the mercy of Kong Le. Apart from the international complications, the principal reason for withholding support of an attack against Vientiane had been the

overwhelming desire of the Lao to avoid bloodshed, and doubts as to whether army commanders outside Vientiane would follow Phoumi in an attack on the city (see item 10 August). If Phoumi attacked and failed, he might be eliminated as a force in Laos and the Army might be seriously divided.

In Dillon's opinion, all-out support of Phoumi was unacceptable to the US. Aside from Viet-Nam and Thailand, US allies would probably not support such a policy. And return of Phoumi to power with US support in a bloody coup would probably lead to the build-up of opposition forces and his eventual overthrow. At the same time US prestige would probably suffer seriously.

Mr. Dillon felt, therefore, that Phoumi and the FAL should be held together as a counterpoise to the situation in Vientiane. For this purpose, [redacted] had been authorized to give Phoumi limited financial support to meet FAL's urgent need for supply. For the present, the US would continue to work with the Souvanna Government, preserving US assets in the country against the day when action might have to be taken to prevent unacceptable developments.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 188, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug Leaflets dropped on Vientiane declared the formation of the "Committee Against the Revolutionary Group," composed of military officers and with General Phoumi Nosavan as its chairman. Accusing Kong Le of forcing the resignation of the Somsanith Government and inviting domination of Laos by the Chinese Communists, the Committee claimed its purpose was to restore order in Vientiane so that the government could function normally.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-33, 22 Aug 60.

18 Aug Ambassador Brown recommended to the Secretary of State that, in view of the danger of a clash between the Souvanna Government and the Phoumi-led FAL, the King be persuaded to bring pressure on both factions to compromise. Dillon, as Acting Secretary, approved and proposed that the Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane attempt to persuade the King. (See item 19 August.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 315, 17 Aug 60;

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 203, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug The French Government's position on Laos, given by an embassy officer to the Department of State, contained the following points: 1) Souvanna was trying to give "reasonable direction" to Kong Le's Revolutionary Committee, his investiture as Premier had been carried out in a manner assuring "maintenance of legality and the Constitution," and he therefore should be "discreetly encouraged" so long as his policies did not endanger Lao or Western interests; 2) Phoumi's movement in the south posed a grave danger of hardening the Laotian Government's position to the detriment of the West and of inviting intervention by the Thais and South Vietnamese; 3) the French commander at Seno had been instructed to support only representatives of the legal government; and, 4) support of Phoumi would endanger Souvanna's achievement of what the French sought for Laos--a neutral government oriented toward the West.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 725, 19 Aug 60.

19 Aug After agreeing on 17 August to a request by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) for their assistance in drafting a memorandum to be sent from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of State urging support of General Phoumi, the JCS forwarded a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense along the desired lines. "Since," stated the JCS, "the situation may take a turn for the worse within the next few days, we recommend that General Phoumi be informed immediately that the U.S. will render him necessary support in his efforts to regain control of the Laos Government." The JCS also recommended that the necessary assistance, particularly aircraft, be provided to General Phoumi as soon as practicable. (See item 23 August.)

(TS) JCSM-373-60, 19 Aug; (S) Note, Secy JCS to Control Div, "Situation in Laos," 17 Aug 60. Both in JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

19 Aug The Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane, having agreed to seek the King's views on the current Laotian crisis, went to Luang Prabang (see item 18 August). Denied access to the King, he was received by the Secretary General of the Royal Palace who stated that His Majesty was not aware of negotiations between Phoumi and Souvanna and had to be "kept outside the conflict." Questioned about the King's refusal to sign the Royal Ordinance appointing members of the new Government, the Secretary General claimed that the Assembly had acted under military pressure and implied that no proper decision could be reached until the military dispute was settled. (An envoy dispatched by the new Government to report the confirmation of the Souvanna cabinet to the King was arrested upon his arrival in Luang Prabang.) (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-31, 22 Aug 60; NYT, 20 Aug 60, 8.

19 Aug The JCS provided CINCPAC with a copy of recently approved, consolidated and revised Terms of Reference for the PEO, Laos. (Up to this time the PEO had been operating under terms of reference set forth in a series of letters and messages during 1955; the new terms resulted from action initiated by CINCPAC in November 1959.) (S) SM-797-60, derived from JCS 1992/826, 27 Jul 60, JMF 9155.2/5191 (23 May 60).

20 Aug General Ouane Rathikone, who had resigned when the Souvanna Government was formed, accepted reappointment as Commander in Chief of the FAL, with Kong Le as his deputy commander. NYT, 21 Aug 60, 19.

20 Aug The British Foreign Office view of Laotian affairs was expressed to an American Embassy officer by the Head of the Southeast Asia Department as follows: 1) Kong Le was typical of Asian Nationalist leaders, and "after he has climbed down somewhat," an effort should be made to live with him; 2) Souvanna was more of a free agent than the US recognized and should be strengthened; and 3) reassertion of a position of power by Phoumi would endanger the long-term stability of the country and would invite another coup. (S) Msg, London to SecState, 887, 20 Aug 60.



21 Aug

CINCPAC commented to the JCS that a compromise between Souvanna and Phoumi seemed predicated on passive acceptance of adjustment to the left in Laos. US interests would best be served by refusal to recognize the Souvanna Government on the ground that it was not legally invested; the US should encourage negotiations but assist Phoumi with "money and discreet transportation through Thailand so that he could increase pressure on Vientiane and be ready to move quickly if disorder broke out there." The US should also encourage the King and other anti-Communist elements to hold out and make clear to the "French-British-Zellweger" types that pressure to secure royal approval of the Souvanna Government would not work.

The JCS concurred in CINCPAC's view that Phoumi should be supported. (See item 23 August 60.)

(S) Msg. CINCPAC to JCS, 202317Z, 21 Aug 60; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC 981873, 24 Aug 60 (JCS Secretariat).

22 Aug

A US Embassy Officer in Thailand reported to the Department of State that initially Thailand had reacted to the Kong Le coup with indecision. However, after meeting with Phoumi, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand conferred with his generals on 15 August and decided to assist Phoumi in efforts to oust rebel forces from Vientiane. Up to this time such assistance had been covert.

In the opinion of the Ambassador, the resolution of the Laotian crisis would be deeply significant for future US-Thai relations, because the Thai would blame the US for failure to act decisively in support of the pro-Western Somsanith Government if it were successfully replaced by a neutralist regime including Communists or pro-Communists.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, Unnumbered, 22 Aug 60.

23 Aug

Souvanna Phouma, after repeated futile efforts to negotiate with General Phoumi and his group, flew in a US plane to confer with the General at Savannakhet. He was accompanied by General Ouane, a representative of Kong Le, a member of the UN staff, and a US military attache. Upon his return to Vientiane, Souvanna reported agreement had been reached. There would be no fighting, no more radio propaganda or leaflets, and, in a few days, "all would go [to] Luang Prabang before [the] King and political problems would be solved by constitutional means."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 374, 23 Aug 60; NYT, 21 Aug 60, 1; 22 Aug 60, 4; 24 Aug 60, 5.

23 Aug

The Ambassador in Laos reported that arming of villagers around Vientiane, including those in areas friendly to the Pathet Lao, had been going on for some time, and had reached the point where this militia was a substantial military factor. Reportedly, Pathet Lao regulars and sympathizers had also been integrated into the defense of Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 371, 23 Aug 60.

23 Aug

At a State-Defense meeting on Laotian policy, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took the position that the US should give to Phoumi, as "our only hope in Laos," an expression "of our strong support to the point of fulfilling any reasonable

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military request by him." Failure to do so would allow Phoumi to "slip and Laos will end up with a neutral, if not pro-Communist government" (see item 21 August).

The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who, with the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, represented the Department of State, agreed that "Phoumi despite his lack [of] popularity was our best bet as [a] staunch anti-Communist." He should, therefore, be given explicit "assurances of our complete support of him and willingness to honor quickly any reasonable request from him."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 226, 23 Aug 60.

26 Aug The Lord Privy Seal stated the British position on Laos to an officer of the US Embassy as follows: 1) a firm government should be established quickly because the Pathet Lao was becoming increasingly active; 2) Phoumi and Souvanna should be encouraged to work together to provide such a government, which could then deal with Kong Le from a position of strength; and 3) the US, while holding the PAL together, should avoid encouraging Phoumi to use force against the Souvanna Government.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1002, 26 Aug 60.

28 Aug In response to a directive from Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chief, PEO Laos, submitted a plan for military action to revitalize the Laotian Army so that it could bring the Pathet Lao under control, and thereby create a favorable climate for civil administration and cold war operations. Essential to the success of the plan was adequate and timely fiscal and logistical support. The plan, which would take about 26 months to carry out, called first for reorganizing and adequately equipping the Laotian Army, then conducting field operations to defeat the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, CH, PEO LAOS to CINCPAC, 28R50Z, 28 Aug 60; (S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF981980, 25 Aug 60 JCS Secretariat.

29 Aug The National Assembly of Laos convened in Luang Prabang. Thirty-four assembly members came with Prince Souvanna from Vientiane and twenty-two arrived with General Phoumi Nosavan from Savannakhet. The first action of the Assembly was to accept the resignation of the Tiao Somsanth Government. After King Savang Vathana had officially approved its resignation, he asked Prince Souvanna to form a new Government.

NYT, 30 Aug 60, 6.

30 Aug The US Ambassador to Thailand, Alexis Johnson, discussed the Laotian crisis with Thai Premier Sarit who was "bitter" over the failure of the US to give stronger support to General Phoumi. As a result of the course of events culminating in the return of Souvanna to power, Sarit was of the opinion that the Pathet Lao were in control of Vientiane, thus placing Communists on the borders of Thailand. This was a matter of profound concern for the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 396, 30 Aug 60.

31 Aug

The National Assembly met at Luang Prabang and approved unanimously the new compromise Government of Souvanna Phouma. The new cabinet included five members of the Somsanith Government, including General Phoumi as Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior. The King accepted the new Government and its leaders departed, Phoumi to Savannakhet to liquidate his revolutionary committee, and Souvanna to Vientiane to explain the composition of the new Government to Kong Le. The paratroop captain, who at first stated his opposition to the inclusion of General Phoumi in the cabinet, announced his acceptance of it the following day.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 446, 31 Aug 60;  
NYT, 31 Aug 60, 4.

1 Sep

The US Ambassador in Paris provided the Secretary of State with the comments of the Chief, Indo-China Affairs, of the French Foreign Office on the situation in Laos. The French official indicated that his government was not happy with Phoumi's presence in the Laotian Government and was especially unhappy about his appointment as Vice Prime Minister. Souvanna would find his hands tied by Phoumi and be unable, therefore, to solve the major problems confronting the government. Moreover, Phoumi's elevation to the Cabinet risked the renewal of the same type of Communist harassment experienced by previous anti-Communist governments. The French official also stated that Kong Le's continued attempts to dictate to a legitimate Government of Laos could not be tolerated, but he was mildly optimistic that Souvanna could handle Kong Le.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 291, 1 Sep 60.

2 Sep

The Department of State expressed concern to Ambassador Brown over the failure of Phoumi to return to Vientiane and take up his duties in the Government-occasioned apparently by fear for his personal safety. The Ambassador was requested, therefore, to inform the Department concerning 1) Souvanna's attitude toward Phoumi's return, and 2) the power and influence wielded by Kong Le. (See item 3 September 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 270, 2 Sep 60.

2 Sep

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs appraised the Laotian situation at the time of the investiture in office of the Souvanna Government as follows:

1. While Kong Le had apparently accepted the new Government, his position was not yet clear, and until this question was resolved the scope for constructive action seemed limited at best.

2. While the US could not forget Souvanna's "tendencies toward self-delusion and shiftiness," he seemed again as in 1956 to "have wide support" as the leader whom the Laotians generally considered to be the best qualified to achieve their "deeply desired but elusive goal" of "quietude" after a period of prolonged conflict.

3. The new Cabinet represented an "exceptionally broad spectrum of Lao political life," encompassing "all shades except Pathet Lao," and two minor tribal groups. The only known leftist in the Cabinet was Quinim Pholsena, and it was significant that he had been shifted to a "relatively minor portfolio" from Interior (the post that he held in the Souvanna Government proposed on 15 August but never approved by the King). On balance the Cabinet was anti-Communist and pro-West. However, it remained to be seen whether it could function effectively or endure long with such disparate elements.

4. Souvanna had taken office under conditions which seemed favorable for his announced policy of restoring peace in the country and ending fratricidal

warfare. While it was not at all certain how representative was Kong Le's rebellion, it remained significant that it was generated from within an elite unit of the FAL, consistently assessed by the US as strongly anti-Pathet Lao.

5. The Kong Le coup had also pointed up personal frictions among senior Lao military leaders and serious dissatisfaction among junior officers. The US had to assume, therefore, that the FAL had been weakened for the time being and the Pathet Lao strengthened, morally and materially, by receipt of arms and by its infiltration of the Vientiane area.

6. The great question was the extent to which the Souvanna Government would attempt to placate the Communists. Souvanna had called for general amnesty and reconciliation, had sought a meeting with the Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong, and reportedly had mentioned integrating a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL and 50 Pathet Lao civil servants into the Administration. The US feared that the Pathet Lao would seek to enmesh Souvanna in protracted discussions and eventually extract major concessions. While anti-Communist ministers, notably Phoumi, should help arrest such a trend, it should be remembered that in the past Souvanna had kept discussions to himself and had often acted on his own without Cabinet approval.

7. With regard to Souvanna's announced policy of "genuine" neutrality, the US must be prepared to see its allies, except for Thailand and Vietnam, either acquiesce in or welcome such a policy.

In spite of these hopeful signs, the Ambassador was directed to caution Souvanna that the US, while sympathetic to the efforts of the Premier to restore peace to his country, could not support him if he came under "substantial control" of the Communist-dominated Pathet Lao. (See item 5 September 60).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 269, 2 Sep 60.

3 Sep

In response to the 2 September inquiry (see item) by the Department of State, the US Ambassador to Laos responded as follows:

1. Souvanna had assured the Ambassador that he was most anxious for Phoumi to come to Vientiane and take up his duties.

2. Kong Le's influence, though "difficult [to] define precisely," was "undoubtedly still considerable." His military influence would be significant so long as he remained in control of the 2d Paratroop Battalion and as long as it was located in a position to influence events in the Vientiane area. Kong Le's political influence remained strong because of the popularity of the stated objectives of his coup (see item 10 August 60). Souvanna, however, had "considerable influence" over the paratroop captain, and General Ouane was attempting "gradually [to] isolate Kong Le from his key officers." He believed, therefore, that although

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Kong Le [was] still a key figure, his capacity to "cause trouble" was gradually decreasing.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 459, 3 Sep 60.

4 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos reported to the Secretary of State that the "essential next step" in Laos was to arrange Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government to help make it work and to provide pro-Western influence and "back-stiffening." Phoumi had stated, to a PEO officer, that his reasons for not returning to Vientiane were 1) it was not safe, and 2) his return would constitute acceptance of a regime which was turning the country over to the Communists. The Ambassador therefore recommended that, in addition to seeking the clarifications and giving the warnings directed by the Department (see item 2 September 60), he 1) send Phoumi a message stating categorically that the US would not support him if he acted alone, and 2) try to persuade Premier Sarit of Thailand to urge Phoumi to enter the Government and fight for his objectives from within. (See item 5 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 462, 4 Sep 60.

5 Sep

The Pathet Lao broadcast its reply to Prince Souvanna's offer of negotiations. They listed the following four conditions that would have to be met before discussions could begin: 1) immediate dismissal of all right-wing ministers from the new Government; 2) an immediate end to fighting in Laos; 3) release of all political prisoners in the country; and 4) a policy of strict neutrality, diplomatic recognition of all countries regardless of their form of government, and acceptance of "unconditional aid" from any country.

NYT, 6 Sep 60, 10.

5 Sep

In response to instructions from the Department of State (see item 2 September 60), the US Ambassador to Laos put the following questions to Premier Souvanna:

1. Could Phoumi be genuinely afraid for his safety? Souvanna replied, "Why should he be? He will sleep with me, eat with me, stay in my house."

2. What did he expect from the Pathet Lao? Souvanna replied that they should lay down their arms in order to be reintegrated into Laotian national life.

3. Did he expect the PL to ask for new elections? Souvanna answered that they probably would, in which case the Government was in an awkward position because, as a result of partly rigged elections, there was not a single Pathet Lao deputy. He did not, however, intend to have any Pathet Lao in the Government.

4. Did he expect the Pathet Lao to ask for diplomatic relations with Hanoi and Peking? Souvanna replied that, in view of the representation from Nationalist China, he did not see how he could avoid it. A possible alternative would be to invite Moscow but not Peking or Hanoi.

5. What was his attitude toward the Army? Souvanna replied it was essential to preserve it.

6. What did he think of the PEO? Souvanna said, "I think we should not renew the contract."  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 465, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep

In response to the recommendation of Ambassador Brown (see item 4 September 60), the US Ambassador to Thailand urged upon the senior Thai officer responsible for contacts between Sarit and Phoumi the desirability of Phoumi's taking up his position in the Government, stating that the US was prepared to furnish such support as feasible to help the Laotian Government control Kong Le. The Thai officer replied that Phoumi feared for his personal safety and would not go to Vientiane unless Souvanna lived up to an alleged agreement to appoint General Bounleuth as FAL Commander in Chief.  
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 427, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep

In view of Phoumi's position as reported by the US Ambassador to Laos (see item 4 September 60), the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs directed the Ambassador to present to Souvanna the following US "views:"

1. The US desires to support the Souvanna Government with Phoumi as a member. But it does not see how any meaningful support could be rendered in a situation where the Laotian Government was unable to establish control of its administrative capital, and a key figure in the cabinet was unable safely to enter the city.

2. Government control of Vientiane could be achieved by appointing a commander of military forces in the city, personally loyal to the Government, and the movement of a battalion of new troops to Vientiane.

The Ambassador was instructed to inform Phoumi of this presentation but to warn him that the US would not support a separatist movement. (See item 6 September 60.)  
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 275, 5 Sep 60.

6 Sep

Pursuant to instructions of the Department of State (see item 5 September 60), Ambassador Brown sent Phoumi the following telegram:

Have today urged strongly on Souvanna importance insuring your safety Vientiane. He assures me you entirely safe. USG believes your participation in government most important. US cannot support you in any separatist movement or effort resolve situation by force.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 476, 6 Sep 60.

6 Sep

The US Ambassador to Laos called on Souvanna and made the following points (see item 5 September 60):

1. Bounleuth should be given a high command post; to which Souvanna replied that he would be made deputy chief of staff.

2. The 2d Paratroop Battalion should be withdrawn from the city; to which Souvanna replied that the Battalion was in the process of withdrawing.



3. Troops satisfactory to the government should be brought into the city; to which Souvanna replied that there were already five or six battalions present.

In response to a question from the Ambassador as to what had been done to reassure Phoumi of his personal safety, Souvanna replied, "I have sent him [a] telegram asking he have confidence in me and return."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 474, 6 Sep 60.

7 Sep

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State that although the French Foreign Office believed that Souvanna's overtures to the Pathet Lao had been unwise, it felt that Phoumi constituted a "greater danger" to FAL stability than Souvanna's dealings with the pro-Communist group. The French did not expect that these contacts would result in a change of the country's basic pro-Western orientation.

In outlining the difference between the French view of Phoumi and that of the US, the Foreign Office said its Government believed that Phoumi no longer represented a "useful political force." He had sought to establish personal control over the FAL and to use it for his own political ends. Phoumi himself, continued the Foreign Office, had revealed that he had prepared a coup in December 1959.

The French believed that Laos should have a strong government, but not a "strong man" and should devote itself to achieving stability through administrative and social reforms. Phoumi could play a "useful" role in Souvanna's Government as a counterpoise to Kong Le and to leftist pressures, but any political role beyond this "constituted danger for peace of area."

A further aspect of the Laotian problem that the French disliked was the Thai support of Phoumi. This could lead to SEATO involvement as the result of Thailand pursuing a "strictly national-interest policy" in Laos. In a treaty area, concluded the Foreign Office, no one country had the right to pursue a "unilateral" policy which might put other members in a difficult position.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 966, 7 Sep 60.

7 Sep

Fearing that, unless Phoumi rejoined the Government soon, Souvanna would eject him from the Cabinet, the Secretary of State directed the Ambassador to Laos to inform the Premier that 1) Phoumi should be retained in the Cabinet, 2) that the US could support neither a Phoumi-led military attack on the legal government nor a government which appeared to be about to yield to impossible conditions imposed by a Communist-led Pathet Lao, 3) therefore, the steps recommended by the Department (see item 5 September 60) to assure Phoumi's safety in Vientiane should be taken (see item 8 September 60).

In addition, the Ambassador in Bangkok was to attempt to persuade Premier Sarit to urge Phoumi to return to Vientiane. (See item 9 September 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 285, 7 Sep 60.



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8 Sep

In accordance with his instructions (see item 7 September) Ambassador Brown discussed Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government with Souvanna. The Premier then agreed to further concessions designed to encourage General Phoumi to return to Vientiane: 1) General Bounleuth to be deputy chief of staff; 2) General Amkha to be deputy commander in chief instead of Kong Le; and 3) Phoumi to be allowed to bring with him a paratroop battalion of his own choice.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 487, 10 Sep 60; and 492, 8 Sep 60.

8 Sep

In Saigon two high Vietnamese Government officials expressed to a US embassy officer their opinion that the US had handled the crisis in Laos "abominably." The US, said the Vietnamese, had permitted a situation to develop which would lead to a Communist takeover of the country. They felt that the US should have "backed up" Phoumi. The two officials also asked if the US would let the Communists take over South Vietnam if a similar situation developed there.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 558, 8 Sep 60.

9 Sep

Premier Sarit, accepting the proposal made to him by the US Ambassador in Bangkok (see item 7 September 60), sent a message to Phoumi urging him to return to Vientiane.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 451, 9 Sep 60, and 462, 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep

In an interview at Savannakhet, an embassy officer and the US Military Attache to Laos urged Phoumi to return to Vientiane to take up his position in the government. The two US representatives stated their case in consonance with the US position as described in cables to the Embassy in Laos (see items 5 and 7 September 60). Shortly before the end of the interview Phoumi stated that an announcement would be made in a few minutes of a revolution against the Souvanna Government in the name of Boun Oum.

In the announcement, broadcast from Savannakhet, Boun Oum declared his Revolutionary Party had seized power and abolished the Constitution to protect the country from the Souvanna Government which had opened the country to Communist aggression from North Vietnam.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 501, 502, and (U) 503, all 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep

The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to seek an audience with King Savang and make the following points:

1. The US believed that Laos was, for the first time since independence, facing a real threat of dismemberment, a situation which would aid the PL in achieving its objective of taking over the country.

2. Under these circumstances the US saw no peaceful solution unless the King exerted his authority. The US wished to know how the King viewed the situation and what were his views and wishes. (See item 13 September 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 294, 10 Sep 60.

13 Sep

In response to instructions of the Secretary of State the Ambassador in Laos called on King Savang in Luang Prabang and urged that the King act to resolve the crisis confronting Laos (see item 10 September 60). The King refused to take action, stating that Souvanna had the power to restore order; let him do so or resign. According to the King, no reconciliation between Souvanna and Phoumi was possible. The former believed negotiations with the Pathet Lao were necessary; the latter believed they would be fatal. In the Ambassador's opinion, the King clearly favored Phoumi and would "do his best by inaction [to] force Souvanna's resignation." (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 522, 13 Sep 60.

15 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos informed the Secretary of State that, in view of the critical state of Laotian affairs, the US should announce support of Souvanna "wholeheartedly and openly," thereby supporting both the "greater segment of national feeling" and the "legally constituted government." Such a policy would also command the respect of major allies and powerful neutrals such as India. It would also be the "surest way [of] keeping Kong Le and his cohorts under control . . . ."

The Ambassador believed that, before giving full support to Souvanna, the US should be assured by the Premier that there would be 1) no negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Laotian Army was reunited, 2) no Pathet Lao in the Cabinet, 3) no recognition of Communist China, North Vietnam or the Soviet Union, and 4) no elections. In addition, Souvanna should agree to direct General Ouane to establish direct relations with regional military commanders in order to facilitate PEO support of the regions, and the PEO teams should be allowed to stay until their job was finished.

There were, according to the Ambassador, two alternatives, both unacceptable. The first was all-out support of Phoumi/Boun Oum, rejected because Phoumi was in revolt against the legal government and had lost stature as the leader of anti-Communist forces because of the revolt of his elite troops and advocacy of a policy of force rather than reconciliation. The second alternative, "inaction leading probably to [the] resignation of Souvanna," was "uncertain and risky" because the Pathet Lao would take advantage of a gradually deteriorating situation.

The Ambassador recommended, therefore, that he be authorized to tell Souvanna that, if the Premier gave the necessary assurances, the US would support him completely, and that all aid to Laos would be channeled through his government. The Ambassador recommended also that if his recommendation were approved, he be allowed to see Phoumi personally to inform him of the decision to support Souvanna. (See item 16 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 536, 15 Sep 60.

15 Sep

In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC said that he had refrained from offering recommendations on the situation in Laos because he had regarded the problem as falling primarily into the political area. However, there had

been no satisfactory political solution. The FAL was beginning to disintegrate into factions, and its capacity to contain the PL was rapidly diminishing. This, said CINCPAC, obviously jeopardized all previous US efforts in Laos and left that country in a militarily untenable position. Therefore, CINCPAC recommended that certain measures be undertaken in order primarily to salvage the FAL and secondarily to assist the Laotians to preserve their country's independence. CINCPAC then listed five recommended measures which the JCS passed on to the Secretary of Defense on the next day. (See item 16 September 60.)  
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142358Z, 15 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Sep

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS expressed their belief that in view of the existing serious situation in Laos "an immediate and aggressive support of General Phoumi, which he has not yet received, would be desirable." However, the JCS pointed out, General Phoumi no longer held office in the "legal Royal Laotian Government," and refused to join the Government. Accordingly, the JCS, in agreement with the views of CINCPAC (see item 15 September 60), proposed that the Secretary of Defense recommend to the Secretary of State as a matter of urgency that the following measures be undertaken:

"a. Commence supplying FAL units via Phoumi using PEO [redacted] in lieu of Ouane/Souvanna channel . . . .

"b. Advise Phoumi to prepare for submittal to King broadest possible successor government to Souvanna Phouma with distinguished, anti-Communist civilian (Boun Oum or Kou Abhay) as Prime Minister. If need be, Souvanna Phouma could be included in harmless post or given major diplomatic assignment to prevent exploitations by PL.

"c. Encourage Phoumi with King's blessing promptly to liquidate Kong Le coup group even at cost of some bloodshed.

"d. Persuade Sarit to arrange discreet transit of FAL troops through Thailand from Savannakhet to Vientiane.

"e. Prepare promptly establish new government as 'Neutral' not through rapprochement with Bloc but through reiteration of traditional Laotian neutrality." (TS) JCSM-415-60, derived from JCS 1992/847, 16 Sept 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

16 Sep

In response to the recommendations of Ambassador Brown (see item 15 September 60) the Acting Secretary of State replied as follows:

1. He agreed with the Ambassador that the US could not give "full support to Boun Oum/Phoumi camp . . . leading to their assumption of power," because it would probably drive Kong Le and his forces into alliance with the Pathet Lao, would alienate major allies and the Lao people, and would probably fail because Phoumi,

lacking internal popular support and international sympathy, might eventually be replaced by a neutralist government willing to make greater concessions to the Communists than those contemplated by Souvanna.

2. The Acting Secretary agreed with the Ambassador that inaction would be risky as it might prolong the existing stalemate.

3. Full support of Souvanna, as recommended by the Ambassador, was not acceptable to the Acting Secretary. Such action would vindicate Kong Le, would be opposed by the King, would have an adverse impact on Thailand and Vietnam, and would result in the US being "stuck with Souvanna" who just does not have the "qualifications . . . required to hold Laos against PL military and subversive tactics."

As an alternative, the Acting Secretary proposed that the US "seek [to] bring to life [a] new government which would be acceptable to [the] majority [of] patriotic elements." The Ambassador was accordingly instructed to seek an audience with the King, if by 19 September Souvanna's resignation was not imminent. In the audience, the Ambassador was to propose that the King call to Luang Prabang the leading figures of the country including Souvanna and Phoumi. They should try to make the Souvanna government as constituted on 30 August function, or, failing that, to devise a new government under a widely respected figure and including both Souvanna and Phoumi (see item 21 September 60).

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that he was "appalled at [the] additional adverse effects" such a policy as Brown's would have on Thailand.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 316, 16 Sep 60;  
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 491, 16 Sep 60.

16 Sep

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK Foreign Office's comments on a possible solution of the Laotian crisis. The UK considered the Laotian problem to be an "internal" matter and was opposed to the idea of an appeal to the UN. Further, on the grounds that the risk of Communist intervention was too great, the UK opposed the idea of open intervention either unilaterally by a Western power or by SEATO. Although the UK believed Souvanna's chances of remaining Prime Minister were "waning," it considered it necessary for the West to "continue to push Souvanna."

(On 22 September the Ambassador concluded his report on the Foreign Office's reaction to the Laotian crisis. The UK claimed that the Souvanna Government had offered the possibility of some form of settlement with the Pathet Lao that would have brought neutrality, peace, and stability to the nation. The UK doubted that it would be possible for Phoumi and Souvanna to work together in whatever new government might emerge in Laos. Moreover, if the Phoumi faction regained its pre-August 9 influence, the UK believed that the same "pressures" that had caused the coup would build up again.)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1387, 16 Sep 60; (C) Msg, London to SecState, 1488, 22 Sep 60.

16 Sep

In response to reports that Pathet Lao forces were attacking Phoumi's garrison in the northeast Laotian town of Sam Neua, the Acting Secretary of State directed that the military supplies (see item 22 August 60) available in Thailand for Laos be airlifted directly to the beleaguered garrison at once.

The Ambassador to Laos was to inform Phoumi, Souvanna, and the British and French Ambassadors that this action was purely military to meet a security threat and was not intended to have political implications.

[On 18 September 1960 Ambassador Brown reported the delivery of a planeload of ammunition and 125 paratroopers of Phoumi's 1st Battalion to Sam Neua.]  
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 315, 16 Sep 60;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 554, 18 Sep 60.

17 Sep

Prince Souvanna declared that the FAL was attacking Sam Neua because the military commanders of that city were loyal to General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum. On 20 September, acting under orders from General Phoumi, the Commandant of Sam Neua refused aid from the Royal Government.

NYT, 18 Sep 60, 16; 21 Sep 60, 4.

18 Sep

The US Ambassador to Laos, in commenting on the Acting Secretary of State's proposal for a new Laotian Government (see item 16 September 60), remarked that "I just don't see any respected figure on the horizon whom [the] King is likely [to] choose who could have leadership qualities or authority necessary to control Kong Le, or to avoid being widely considered as [a] Phoumi/US stooge."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 555, 18 Sep 60.

19 Sep

CINCPAC, in a message to JCS, referred to comments from the US Ambassador to Laos that indicated Phoumi was thinking of fomenting a general mutiny among FAL troops and junior officers. The addition of this disruptive force to the various stresses and strains then being applied to the FAL, said CINCPAC, could only accelerate the defection of the PL units in the FAL. Souvanna's attitude in this regard was, in CINCPAC's opinion, an additional argument in favor of CINCPAC's previous recommendation to support FAL units through Phoumi. (See item 15 September 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 192147Z, 19 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat; (S) Msg, Vientiane to JCS, 556, 18 Sep 60.

20 Sep

A Pathet Lao broadcast declared that all PL armed units had been ordered to cease military activities in northern Laos. This order, the broadcast said, was to affirm the movement's support of Prince Souvanna's neutralist government.

NYT, 21 Sep 60, 4.

20-22  
Sep

The first open clashes between Souvanna's forces and those of the "Revolutionary Committee" took place near Paksane on 20 September. (The following day Premier Souvanna claimed that government forces had halted the advance of the attackers and that they

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had withdrawn to Paksane. On the 22 September, the RLG announced that the Government forces, led by Kong Le, had recaptured the town.)  
NYT, 22 Sep 60, 1, 4; 23 Sep 60, 4.

21 Sep

In a television address, Premier Sarit reviewed the Laotian situation which Thailand had been "considering with utmost anxiety and concern because it has shown from the beginning obvious signs [of] Communist influence." Vientiane, said Sarit, was under Communist influence, a situation which, if it persisted, would place all Laos in Communist hands.

The Thais continued Sarit, had no desire to interfere in any manner in the internal affairs of Laos. But if Laos were to become a danger to Thailand, Sarit said, Thailand would defend itself and would hope to receive assistance and cooperation from friendly nations of the Free World.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 523, 21 Sep 60.

21 Sep

Ambassador Brown informed Souvanna, in response to instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, that the US had decided to urge the King to bring together the leading personalities of the country in order to form a new Government (see item 16 September 60). Souvanna replied that he was fully in accord with such a policy and that some reconciliation and agreement must take place. Asked if he would step down as Premier if the King desired it, Souvanna replied, "I am ready [to] retire."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 579, 21 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos, in accordance with instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, urged the King to call an assembly of notables for the purpose of forming a new government (see item 16 September 60). The King replied that the military situation had to be taken care of first, and that he was accordingly calling a meeting of senior military commanders to find a consensus for strong defense against the Pathet Lao. Then the political situation would be dealt with. The King said that the government would be reshuffled, but that he would like to keep Souvanna as Premier and have Phoumi as Commander in Chief of the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 593, 22 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The US Ambassador to France informed the Secretary of State that the French strongly believed that the US suggestion to King Savang that he form a new Government represented "interference in Laotian internal affairs." According to the French, the US had not used "all available means" to persuade Phoumi to cooperate loyally with the legal Government. To the contrary, Phoumi had enjoyed a position of favor resulting from direct provision of supplies and money by the US. Consequently, Souvanna had been unable to unite the country, and the Pathet Lao was profiting from the resulting weakness.

In strong terms the French expressed their "regret" that the US had not consulted them before proposing to King Savang the formation of a new government. Although admitting US primary responsibility in Laos, the Foreign Office pointed out that the French had

extensive political, economic, and military interests not only in that country but also in other parts of Southeast Asia. They were "keenly aware" that if this action of the United States should lead to a "critical situation" in Southeast Asia, France would also have to pay the consequences while being a "victim of policy" in whose formulation it had been permitted no voice.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1219, 22 Sep 60.

23 Sep

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS suggested that certain steps be taken "in order to have in being at the appropriate time a plan for the United States to offer Laos to assist that nation in defeating Communist insurgency." The JCS believed that when conditions in Laos became stabilized under a government friendly to the US, that government should be encouraged to adopt a national course of action designed to remove the insurgent threat. They felt, said the JCS, that such steps were vital to the preservation of Laos' freedom, and important in precluding the necessity for implementing US or SEATO war plans. The JCS suggested that the following steps be taken:

- a. The enclosed draft outline plan, prepared for the Royal Laotian Government, should be forwarded to the US Ambassador in Laos and his Country Team for study, comment and further development.
- b. A joint State-DOD-ICA directive should be issued to cause the preparation of estimates of US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support required for execution of the national emergency plan of the Royal Laotian Government.
- c. The expanded national plan of the Royal Laotian Government and the estimate of US support required should be reviewed jointly by the US Government agencies concerned.
- d. Action should be taken to obtain the agreement and cooperation of France and the United Kingdom to include combined France/US training and operational advice to civil and military agencies.
- e. When policy approval and budgetary support arrangements have been completed by US Government agencies, the US Ambassador to Laos should be required to initiate action to gain acceptance of the plan by the Royal Laotian Government.
- f. Provided the plan for counter-insurgency operations is approved and implemented by the Royal Laotian Government, US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support should be provided according to the ability of the country to receive and effectively utilize such support.

In conclusion the JCS recommended that the Secretary of Defense act to obtain support of the draft outline plan and the Joint State-DOD-ICA directive, and



thereafter have both documents transmitted to the Ambassador and his Country Team and to CINCPAC for necessary action. (See items 5 October and 19 October 60.)

(TS) JCSM-419-60, derived from JCS 1992/482, 23 Dec 60, JMF 9080/3360 (27 Apr 60).

23 Sep

Two officers of the US Embassy called on Boun Oum and Phoumi in order to state the US policy position on Laos (see item 16 September 60), and to urge Phoumi to attend the meeting of military leaders as requested by the King. Phoumi replied that the US "badly misunderstood" the Savannakhet position. No separatists, Phoumi and Boun Oum were loyal to the King but felt he should either appoint a strong leader or assume leadership himself. However, there was no need for a meeting of military leaders at Luang Prabang because the split in the country was political and not military. It was between Communists and non-Communists, with Vientiane already red "up to the neck."

Phoumi refused to attend the meeting of military leaders because 1) it would be useless, and 2) Luang Prabang was not safe.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 597, 23 Sep 60.

24 Sep

In an effort to achieve maximum accord on Laos, representatives of the US, the UK, and France met at the UN and produced a working paper which received the general approval of the respective foreign ministers. The paper stated the following common objectives: 1) prevent the collapse of Laos; 2) prevent strife between the non-Communist elements; 3) preserve the territorial unity of Laos; and 4) conserve the ability of Laos to resist Communist pressures from without and within.

Two steps to be taken by the three signatory powers immediately to meet the common objectives were: 1) promote a maximum degree of coordination, and 2) make it known that while the three Governments were acting independently there was unity among them.

A subsidiary problem, but one important to the common objectives of the three powers in Laos, was to end the critical shortage of petroleum products in Laos brought about by the closing of the Thai-Lao border on 9 August. For this purpose the respective ambassadors in Bangkok should bring appropriate pressure on the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, New York to SecState, SECTO 9, 24 Sep 60;  
(S) Msg, New York to SecState, SECTO 10, 24 Sep 60.

25-29  
Sep

Premier Souvanna requested US help in airlifting petroleum products from Phnom Penh in order to circumvent the Thai embargo (see item 9 August 60). In response, the US Government directed Ambassador Johnson to urge Premier Sarit to permit free movement of civilian supplies to Vientiane. The Ambassador pointed out that the embargo had little effect on the Pathet Lao but was alienating Lao public opinion. The Thai Government replied that it would be willing to consider petroleum shipments to Vientiane for the "public welfare" upon receipt of a request for such shipments from the Laotian Government.



On the 28th, the Thai representative announced at a meeting of the SEATO Council that a Laotian Government request for a shipment of petroleum products was "being considered" by his Government. (See item 26-27 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 608, 25 Sep 60;  
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 340, 26 Sep 60; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 559, 23 Sep 60, and 568, 29 Sep 60.

26 Sep

The Pathet Lao resumed its attack on Sam Neua. Although the garrison's commander described the situation as "very, very serious," he said he would take help and orders only from the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet. He admitted, however, that he had received only one company of paratroopers from Savannakhet since the crisis started. (See item 16 September 60.)

(On 28 September the town fell to Kong Le and the Pathet Lao.)  
NYT, 27 Sep 60, 4; 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

Ambassador Brown reported that several Laotian military leaders, including Ouane and Phoumi, met with the King at Luang Prabang. Phoumi and Ouane reportedly agreed to a cease-fire in the Paksane area and agreed to work together against the Pathet Lao; for the time being, however, they decided to keep their commands independent of each other.

The King was also reported to have indicated displeasure with Souvanna and a desire for a new government headed by someone else. According to Ouane, Phoumi proposed Boun Oum as Premier and Souvanna and Souphanouvong as Deputy Premiers.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 646, 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

In a cable to the Department of State, the US Embassy in London reported the British Foreign Office opinions on possible results of proposed Phoumi-Souvanna talks in Luang Prabang (see item 16 September 60). Kong Le, said the British, would resist any arrangements which would give Phoumi the power to retaliate against the coup leader. Further, Phoumi would not give up his present "power position" unless he, too, could be assured against retaliation. Turning to the idea that Souvanna and Phoumi might work together under a mutually agreed upon Prime Minister, the Foreign Office suggested Phoui Sananikone as the man to head the new Government.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1563, 28 Sep 60.

29 Sep

Premier Souvanna admitted to Ambassador Brown that negotiations were under way for an exchange of diplomatic missions between the Lao and Soviet Governments. In response to Brown's warnings of the dangers inherent in such a course, Souvanna replied that the exchange of diplomatic envoys was necessary to satisfy the craving of the Lao people for a policy of neutrality.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 626, 27 Sep 60.

29 Sep

In a statement to the UN General Assembly, Prince Sihanouk, the Cambodian Chief of State, urged an end to foreign influences and pressures in Laos and suggested that the two "Blocs" agree to remove Cambodia and Laos from "the list of their zones of rivalry," and consider them as buffer states. This neutrality belt should be "seriously and solemnly" guaranteed by the Western Powers and their allies. (See item 12 December 60.)

(U) Msg, New York to SecState, 846, 30 Sep 60; NYT, 30 Sep 60, 8.

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1 Oct

The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to inform King Savang that, in view of the deterioration of military and political leadership in Laos, "no further payment of troops or other forms of aid [were] to be forthcoming until" the King 1) assumed leadership of the Government himself or named a Premier other than Souvanna, and 2) named a Commander in Chief who could unite the bitterly divided remnants of the FAL.

However, the Ambassador was informed that the suspension of aid did not preclude supplying troops in action against the Pathet Lao or on the front lines, even if the necessary supplies had to be procured from stocks outside the country. Specifically, the direct aid to Phoumi already authorized (see item 15 September 60) was to be continued.

(TS, Eyes Only) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 365, 1 Oct 60; Vientiane to SecState, 662, 20 Oct 60; (TS, Eyes Only) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 368, 3 Oct 60. Both in CJCS 091 (Laos).

1 Oct

In a statement broadcast over the Hanoi radio, the NLHX announced that, providing the following conditions were met, it was ready to negotiate with Souvanna's Government:

- 1) Establishment of a coalition Government, to include Pathet Lao representation in the Cabinet.
  - 2) Establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Communist China, and North Vietnam.
  - 3) Laotian opposition to SEATO, and an end to the UN "presence" in Laos.
  - 4) An end to attacks on the Pathet Lao movement and the release of all its members in prison.
  - 5) Continued opposition to the Right-wing forces that rebelled against the neutralist Government.
- NYT, 2 Oct 60, 3; 7 Oct 60, 4.

1 Oct

Premier Souvanna announced at a press conference that he was sending representatives to resume control for the Government of Sam Neua. These representatives were stopped by the Pathet Lao and prevented from carrying out their mission.

(S) DIB, 4 Oct 60, 3; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 657, 1 Oct 60.

1 Oct

The US Ambassador to Laos severely criticized Premier Souvanna for dismissing Generals Phoumi, Bounleuth and 25 other officers. The Ambassador pointed out that the efforts of the past weeks for renewed unity and understanding within the FAL had been placed in jeopardy just as they were beginning to show signs of success. This situation was made worse by the fact that on 30 September Kong Le had told the press he had been urging Souvanna for several days to sign the dismissal order.

The Ambassador then emphasized the need for political discussions soon for the purpose of finding

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agreement between the Souvanna and Phoumi factions. The Premier replied by urging the Ambassador to use US influence to persuade Phoumi to accept the Souvanna Government, which was the legal regime, and to disband the Revolutionary Committee at Savannakhet.  
(S) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 658, 1 Oct 60.

3 Oct Ambassador Brown, while agreeing that it was "imperative [to] get the King [to] bring political figures together and force unity" (see item 1 October 60), warned the Secretary of State that forced removal of Souvanna was unwise because 1) neither the King nor any political figure could be found to replace him, and 2) it would "have consequences in terms [of] PL insurgency . . . almost impossible to combat in [the] present stage [of] disintegration [of the] country and [the] FAL."

(TS, Eyes Only) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 669, 3 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

3 Oct ~~SECRET~~ renewed attacks by Kong Le forces against Phoumi's troops, the JCS authorized CINCPAC to take immediately any or all of the following actions to prevent another defeat, which could be fatal to the portion of the FAL loyal to Phoumi:

1. Provide necessary arms and supplies.
  2. Deliver the Laotian paratroop battalion training at Lopburi, Thailand, to Phoumi at whatever location CINCPAC felt best.
  3. Air-lift other Phoumi forces as desirable.
  4. Direct Chief, PEO, to attempt to persuade Generals Ouane and Phoumi to make a joint effort to save Laos. (See item 4 October 60.)
- (S) Msg. JCS to CINCPAC, 983752, 3 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4 Oct The US Ambassador in Paris reported French Foreign Office reactions to the situation in Laos. The French believed that the situation required the US, the UK, and France to give "joint and energetic" support to a Laotian program of national unity in support of the King and to a legal government from which the PL would be excluded. The French also emphasized that they saw no alternative to Souvanna. To remove him in the present crisis, they said, could lead only to "chaos."

The Foreign Office pointed out that the guarantees they had received from Souvanna not to include the PL in his Government and to seek the unity of his country were in accord with the Tripartite Agreement on Laos (see item 24 September 60).

Souvanna had done all he could to unify the nation, the Foreign Office continued, but Phoumi had reneged from the very start on his duties agreed upon at Luang Prabang. Souvanna was in a "very weak" position. The Army, badly split, was becoming increasingly ineffectual. Phoumi was losing control even over the troops in the south, and this, the Foreign Office pointed out, left the field "dangerously" clear for the Pathet Lao. (According to French

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reports, on three occasions Phoumi's troops had defected to the PL, and it was the French belief that in the 2d military region, the PL could do just about anything it wished.)

Although the French had no objection to the US proposal to make a third attempt (see item 16 September 60) with the King to reconcile Souvanna, Phoumi, and Boun Oum, they had no "illusion" concerning its chances of success. They did not believe Phoumi would agree to a reconciliation and pointed out that his proposal for Souphannouvong's acceptance in the Government was clearly not consistent with the three-power agreement. The US proposal to advise King Savang to appoint a new Government and to inform him that the US would not support Souvanna would be, according to the French, the "height of folly" at this time. Further, the Foreign Office believed that in taking this step without previous consultations with the French, the US was violating the "parallel action" envisaged in the Tripartite Agreement. It was "obvious," the Foreign Office declared, that there was "no unity between Western allies."  
(TS) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1368, 4 Oct 60, CJCS C91 (Laos).

4 Oct

Pursuant to instructions from the JCS (see item 3 October 60), CINCPAC ordered Chief, PEO: to approach Phoumi and Ouane and attempt their rapprochement; to imploy CAT airlift for the movement of Phoumi's supplies and personnel; and to deliver the Lcpburi contingent to Phoumi at the place where it was most needed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO/Laos, 7049, 4 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4-5 Oct

Two influential Thais, SEATO Secretary General Pote Sarasin and Acting Foreign Minister Boon Charoenchai, expressed approval of Sinhanouk's proposal for a "neutral belt" composed of Cambodia and Laos (see item 29 September 60), provided that the two nations became truly "neutral" and not merely "neutralist" as a cover of respectability for Communist control. Sarasin pointed out that, in view of Phoumi's military and political ineffectiveness, the "neutral belt" might be the "only hope of salvaging anything" in Laos.  
(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 601, 4 Oct 60; and 606, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

The Vientiane radio broadcast an announcement that the King had approved establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 674, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

Enclosed in a letter to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense transmitted a copy of a memorandum from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on counter-insurgency operations in Laos, along with CINCPAC's draft plan and a proposed State-Defense-ICA message (see item 23 September 60). The Secretary stated that he agreed in principle with comments of the JCS and wished to make their recommendations and CINCPAC's draft plan available to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of Defense requested the Secretary of State's early comment on, or concurrence with, the proposed message. (See item 19 October 60.)  
(TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, no subj, 5 Oct 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60).

6 Oct

In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of State, the Ambassador to Laos in an audience with the King informed him of the cessation of US military aid and the conditions for its resumption (see item 1 October 60). In response, the King replied that he could not act on either condition. He would not take steps to bring about the replacement of the Souvanna Government nor would he appoint a new military commander.

In spite of repeated urging by the Ambassador who said that "if no action [were] taken all might be lost," the King, as he had done in the past, protested that as a constitutional monarch there was nothing he could do unless the Government resigned.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 683, 6 Oct 60.

6 Oct

The US Ambassador in Bangkok recommended to the Department of State that, "if assessment of [Phoumi's] capabilities [were] favorable," covert and semi-covert support be provided him as an intermediate stage before undertaking "exclusive overt support."

In either event the US should be prepared to give "categorical assurances we would back up [the] Thai and come to their aid if they got in trouble" participating in such action.

The Ambassador recommended that in order to make such intervention as effective as possible, "direct and effective operating relationships" be established between PEO, [redacted] and the US Embassy in Thailand.

(US, Eyes Only) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 615, 6 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

6 Oct

The US Ambassador in London informed the Department of State that, in the opinion of the British Foreign Office, it would be better if Phoumi were either "utterly" defeated or "integrated" into the Government, because his continuing opposition was forcing Souvanna to rely upon Pathet Lao support, thus giving the latter an opportunity to spread its influence. The "elimination" of Phoumi would permit Souvanna to take a stand independent of support from the PL, thereby placing him in a position of "increased strength" for negotiations with the pro-Communist group. At the same time, however, the Foreign Office believed that nothing should be done to "rupture" the cease-fire agreement, which they viewed as the "best hope" for the future peace and stability of the country.

From the British viewpoint, Souvanna was now the only leader who could bring Laos through as a non-Communist, although neutralist, country. There was no one else at the moment under whom disparate factions would be prepared to work.

The British believed that the US was being "somewhat disingenuous" in cutting off aid to Laos. Phoumi, the British said, would continue to obtain help from Thailand. Souvanna's Government, on the other hand, would suffer from an aid cut, to the profit of the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1700, 6 Oct 60.

7 Oct

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC recommended against the reinforcement of Phoumi's forces either by the Thai Police Aerial Resupply Unit or by the Thai Ranger Battalion because such action would constitute an invitation to overt intervention by the Viet Minh or Chinese Communists.

In CINCPAC's opinion, however, decisive action was needed to prevent all FAL forces loyal to Phoumi from being "disintegrated" piece-meal by the Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces. This "disintegration" could only be prevented by outside support, including leadership by US advisers at battalion level. Mere supply, pay, and lift would not be enough in view of the serious weakness of Laotian military leadership.

Since military action could not take place in a vacuum, CINCPAC proposed the following political and military steps:

1. Ambassador Brown should tell the King that the US, determined to prevent the loss of Laos to Communism, was directing all its aid to the Savannakhet forces. If the King wished to cooperate he should immediately proclaim a new Government with Phoumi as Minister of Defense.
  2. With or without the King, the US should move vigorously to support the Savannakhet group, including assignment of advisers at the battalion level.
  3. If the King did not go along and if the Lao troops, even with US leaders, failed to fight, the US should abandon Laos and concentrate on the defense of Vietnam and Thailand.
- (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 983946, 6 Oct 60;  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8352, 7 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

7 Oct

In view of the King's unwillingness to assume the responsibility requested of him (see items 1 and 6 October 60), high ranking representatives of the JCS, CIA, Department of Defense, and Department of State met and agreed to make one last, desperate effort to work with Souvanna "as the legal facade of legitimate government," while supporting Phoumi and other anti-Communist forces at the same time. But continued support by the US for Souvanna was to be contingent upon "his concurrence with the following actions:"

1. Movement of the seat of government to Luang Prabang where it would be near the King and not imperiled by the Kong Le threat.
2. The taking of all feasible steps to prevent Kong Le from initiating action against any FAL units, and desisting immediately from any threat or hostile act against Savannakhet.
3. The taking of all feasible precautions, through Ouane and his forces, with the advice of the PEO, to preserve the Treasury assets of the Government.

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4. The desisting from negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Government was able to talk from a position of unity and strength.

CINCPAC, with the cooperation of Chief, PEO, and Chief, JUSMAAG, Thailand, was directed to supply General Phoumi's forces directly, because the precarious political situation precluded supply through the centralized military agencies of the Laotian Government. Special military and political advisors were to facilitate the logistical operations and to insure that Phoumi understood the "overall plan and concept" under which direct supply was to be undertaken (see item 8 October 60). In particular, Phoumi was to understand that he would be subject to Souvanna's Government if it met the conditions set forth above. The Department of State was to inform the French, British, and Australian Governments of the "overall plan;" the Ambassador in Thailand was to inform the Thai Government.

A special mission including the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Parsons, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Irwin, and the Chief of Staff of CINCPAC, Vice Admiral Riley, were to go to the Far East to consult with the Ambassador, explain the "thinking and details" of the plan, and carry out "any other representation deemed advisable."  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 384, 8 Oct 60.

7 Oct

Premier Souvanna stated to Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Government was about to begin negotiations with the Pathet Lao (see item 11 October 60). These talks, according to the Premier, would be confined to 1) acceptance of the NLHX as an equal member of the body politic through supplemental elections to the General Assembly; and 2) integration of a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 694, 8 Oct 60.

8 Oct

The JCS directed CINCPAC to furnish the operational and logistic guidance called for in the US policy decision to support General Phoumi (see item 7 October 60) as follows:

1. The Acting Chief, PEO, was to establish as large a permanent mission as he considered necessary with Phoumi's forces in order to carry out the missions. PEO personnel were not to serve in combat, however.

2. Transport of supplies was authorized and directed to Phoumi's forces in the 3rd and 4th Military Regions and to anti-Communist elements in the other regions as feasible.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984040, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC stated that: 1) US military advisory personnel in Laos were sufficient to provide adequate effective field advisory support to Phoumi in the operations envisaged; and 2) Laos MAP supplies at Bangkok were



not adequate to support combat operations, but would be so when outstanding PEO requisitions had been filled.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 983974, 7 Oct 60;  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8761, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

The Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, reported preliminary personal reactions from the British and Australian Embassies in Washington on the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60).

Both Embassies had questioned the feasibility and desirability of moving the Government to Luang Prabang. They had seen a conflict between that proposal and the condition that Souvanna take steps to exert authority over Kong Le, and they had expressed concern that Kong Le, if isolated in Vientiane, would move even closer to the PL.

They had felt that Souvanna would have difficulty stopping negotiations with the PL whose representatives were already in Vientiane. The Australian Embassy expressed the opinion that, rather than preclude negotiations entirely, the US should try to set "clearly defined limits" for Souvanna, beyond which he could not go in negotiations with the PL.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 389, 8 Oct 60.

9 Oct

As instructed, the Ambassador to Laos presented a demarche to Souvanna (see item 7 October 60). The Premier stated he had already considered moving the government to Luang Prabang and thought such a move could be arranged. He indicated there would be no difficulty in restraining Kong Le and safeguarding the assets of the government. To suspend negotiations with the Pathet Lao, however, would be very difficult, as the arrangements had already been made, and it was important to reach a settlement as soon as possible.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 708, 9 Oct 60.

11 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported that negotiations between the Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao opened at the Prime Ministry in Vientiane. Quinn, recognized as the most leftist Cabinet member, according to the Ambassador, headed the Laotian Government delegation.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 744, 14 Oct 60;

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 718, 11 Oct 60.

11 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the French had given "general support" to the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60). The French believed, however, that before the government was moved to Luang Prabang, definite means of governing and controlling Vientiane should be established. According to the French, there were "clear" indications of Kong Le-PL collaboration, and they believed it would be particularly serious to leave Kong Le alone in the capital without adequate control, especially because US aid to Phoumi had increased the risk of throwing Kong Le into the PL

camp. Although the French had always regretted that Souvanna had entered into negotiations with the PL, they now felt that these negotiations should be "dragged out" so that Souvanna could obtain breathing space in order to reconstitute national unity.

14 Oct

(S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane, 400, 11 Oct 60.  
Assistant Secretary Parsons reported to the Secretary of State that the suspension of US aid to Laos was having the following unfavorable consequences:

1. The Laotian Government, beset by the Pathet Lao and the Phoumi rebels, might accept an aid offer from the recently arrived Soviet mission.
2. The Laotian Government was resorting to deficit financing to pay its bills, thereby endangering the stability of the currency and the whole economic structure of the country.
3. The Laotian Government might seek to embarrass the US by questioning the legality of US support for the Phoumi rebel group under Mutual Security legislation which specified aid to "nations" but not to "groups."

Parsons had therefore authorized, as a stop-gap measure, release of about \$100,000 for various non-controversial economic projects.

14 Oct

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 663, 14 Oct 60.  
Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Thai Premier Sarit was encouraged by the US demarche to Souvanna (see item 9 October 60) and by other indications that the US was moving to deal with the Lao situation. While not specifically approving US action, Sarit stated he was prepared to cooperate fully.

At the same time, the Ambassador warned that suspension of US aid to Laos (see item 1 October 60), plus the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union (see item 5 October 60), had given the impression to Thailand that Laos was rapidly passing into the Communist orbit.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, unnumbered, 14 Oct 60.

14 Oct

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that he approve terms of reference, as a basis for coordination with the Department of State, for the assignment of a US military advisor to General Phoumi. The civilian US Special Advisor to the General, said the JCS, had expressed the view that General Phoumi needed and would welcome a full time US Military Advisor. CINCPAC and the interdepartmental working group on Laos had agreed to such an appointment. The terms of reference proposed by the JCS were as follows:

- a. . . . [The selected officer] is designated the personal U.S. military advisor to General Phoumi Nosavan. In this latter capacity he is authorized and directed to report directly to CINCPAC, informing Chief, PEO as appropriate. His designation for this

additional function will be transmitted by separate action through appropriate official channels.

b. He will maintain closest possible continuing liaison with General Phoumi, for the purpose of furnishing information to CINCPAC on General Phoumi's plans, activities, and requirements, and in order to assist General Phoumi.

c. In the execution of this responsibility, his functions will include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) Advise and assist General Phoumi in immediate measures to improve the morale and combat efficiency of forces under General Phoumi's control.

(2) Advise and assist General Phoumi in the planning and direction of military operations.

(3) Assist and advise General Phoumi in the orderly planning of necessary logistic support; and in the effective utilization of such supplies as are delivered.

CINCPAC was directed by JCS to issue the "terms of reference" stated above as instructions to the officer designated as Phoumi's military advisor.

(S) JCSM-468-60, derived from JCS 1992/855, 14 Oct 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60); (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984377, 14 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Oct

Assistant Secretary Parsons, reporting the findings of his visit to Laos to the Secretary of State, described the three factors needed to salvage the situation in Laos: 1) Souvanna must acquiesce in US policy and actions for as long as he remained in office; 2) the anti-Communist elements must regain control of Laotian Government policy and defeat a greatly strengthened Pathet Lao; 3) The US must support anti-Communists in Laos and at the same time avoid indictment in the UN, further cleavage in SEATO, and alignment of the French and British against the US.

Parsons warned that Souvanna could place the US in an impossible situation by demanding a halt to US support of Phoumi or demanding the withdrawal of the PEO. Moreover, Phoumi's forces had not performed well in combat, and anti-Communist leaders in Vientiane did "little but wring their hands."

The US should, concluded Parsons: 1) find the basis for resuming budgetary support of the RLG; 2) eliminate Souvanna's power to destroy US policy at any moment by requesting removal of PEO and cessation of aid to Phoumi; 3) extricate itself from the untenable position of supporting a group of rebels, for which support the US could be "hailed defenseless

before the UN;" and 4) accept the fact that only over the long haul could military forces be built up to the point where they would have the will and capacity to restore the status quo ante the Kong Le coup.

(Assistant Secretary of Defense Irwin, in a report submitted the previous day, had differed with Parsons regarding aid for Phoumi. While recognizing the political risks involved, he recommended that the overriding consideration should be adequate support of the General; the additional effort needed to make such support effective should be made since it did not create a risk but simply increased the risk.)  
(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 668, 15 Oct 60, and 673, 16 Oct 60.

17-18 Oct

In accordance with instructions from Assistant Secretary Parsons, Ambassador Brown urged Souvanna to agree to distribution by the US of supplies direct to all Laotian units, including those of Phoumi. The Premier agreed, provided Phoumi recognized the Souvanna Government. A decision would be deferred, however, pending the return of an emissary sent to Phoumi to seek such recognition.

To encourage a favorable decision, the Ambassador recommended the following further action to the Secretary of State: 1) Tell Souvanna that resumption of US aid was dependent upon inclusion of aid for Phoumi; 2) Pending a reply from Souvanna on (1) above, load supplies for earliest delivery to Phoumi because of the Pathet Lao build up in the north; 3) Tell Phoumi he must make a reasonable response to Souvanna's feeler.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 676, 17 Oct 60;  
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 765, 17 Oct 60; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 420, 17 Oct 60; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 771, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, for reasons of expediency, the US Government had accepted "the inevitable of working with Souvanna Phouma as the constitutional and legally installed Prime Minister." The course of action and desired conditions set forth on 7 October (see item) would remain as valid and basic goals, but could not be achieved as soon as desired. In conformity with this concept, the Secretary of State listed the following tasks as appropriate: 1) continue to press Souvanna to extricate himself from the influence of Kong Le; 2) failing this extrication, "take whatever feasible steps present themselves" to encourage his replacement in favor of another legally appointed Prime Minister; 3) remove as much of the treasury as possible from Vientiane; 4) continue efforts to control or neutralize Kong Le; as a minimum remove him from Vientiane; 5) exert maximum pressure to slow down and, if possible, sabotage Souvanna's negotiations with the Pathet Lao; 6) urge Phoumi to dissolve his Revolutionary Committee "voluntarily," so that he would cease to be legally a rebel.

As a result of this new evaluation, the Secretary of State authorized Ambassador Brown to lift the "temporary embargo" resulting from suspension of "certain categories" of aid to Laos.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 425, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

At a meeting with Assistant Secretary Irwin and Admiral Riley at Ubon, Thailand, General Phoumi stated his intention to gain control of Laos by "retaking" Vientiane. This attack, to be undertaken by troops of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Military Regions, would require US equipment and supplies.

Irwin informed General Phoumi that aid to his forces would be limited because of the "proper relationships" maintained by the US toward the Vientiane Government which had declared Phoumi and his supporters to be rebels. The general should, therefore, avoid "independent and uncoordinated actions" and follow closely the guidance of his US military and political advisors. Admiral Riley emphasized that the "unique political situation" compelled the US to "exercise restraint offensively" until the anti-Communist element became the legal government. Until such a government was achieved Phoumi should concentrate on the following:

1. Consolidation of strength in the South to achieve an "impregnable defense against [the] Pathet Lao and Kong Le."
2. Unification of all anti-Communist elements in the country.
3. Preparation of "offensive plans for later implementation after [the] consolidation stage." These plans should be submitted, via the US military advisor, to CINCPAC for approval.

Phoumi replied that his views coincided with those of the Admiral, but imminent Pathet Lao attacks and the rapid movement of Vientiane to the left, demonstrated by the installation of a Soviet embassy there, might make "quick, effective action" necessary. [To which Irwin and Riley replied that no direct attack to capture Vientiane should be undertaken except with the approval of a new, legal, anti-Communist Government.]

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 686, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

Assistant Secretary Irwin, reporting the findings of his trip to Laos, concluded that no improvement could be expected in the US position there so long as Souvanna remained Premier. The US should therefore attempt to bring about Souvanna's resignation or removal through the King's intervention. Until such a resignation took place, the US would be in the politically hazardous position of maintaining relations with the legal Laotian Government while giving covert support to a force in rebellion against it. Although Irwin agreed with Parson's estimate of the dangers involved (see item 16 October 50), he felt that the US should not be deterred from rendering "substantial assistance" to Phoumi in a "careful and cautious manner" so long as Souvanna remained in power. Failure to do so would risk the ultimate loss of Laos to the Communists.

Action already taken, such as the assignment of PEO personnel to Phoumi's forces, had been helpful,

but in Irwin's opinion, the US should give serious consideration to further steps such as assignment of US military advisors at battalion level and the employment of "a few" US, Thai, or Vietnamese volunteers.

(TS) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 839, 18 Oct 60.

19 Oct

In a message to CINCPAC, Admiral Riley stated his disagreement with the Laotian policy advocated by Assistant Secretary Parsons (see item 16 October 60). Riley believed that the overriding consideration was to prevent, by all feasible means, the loss of Laos to communism, and that limited aid would fail to sustain the anti-Communist forces.

In view of the failure of Souvanna to comply with the conditions promulgated by the US (see item 7 October 60), Riley urged as an alternative course of action securing Souvanna's removal and staunchly supporting an anti-Communist government established by the King. Pending the establishment of such a government, Riley recommended that the US accept the political risk involved and give adequate support to the anti-Communist forces in Laos.

(TS) Msg, COMUSJAPAN to CINCPAC, 191615Z, 19 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

19 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had asked the UN representative in Laos whether the UN could furnish military observers to investigate reports of incursions by the Viet Minh into Laos. The Premier was particularly anxious to forestall a return of the International Control Commission. The UN representative replied that he would transmit the request to the Secretary General, but he was not hopeful that anything would be accomplished by the request.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 785, 19 Oct 60.

19 Oct

Souvanna agreed to a US proposal that supplies be sent direct to military forces and that pay be disbursed through Vientiane. He conditioned his agreement, however, with the proviso that such aid not be used against him and that the US discourage any attempt at revolt by FAL officers of the 1st Region (Luang Prabang). These conditions were accepted by the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 787, 19 Oct 60;

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 19 Oct 60.

19 Oct

The Secretary of State, in a letter replying to the letter of the Secretary of Defense which forwarded a memorandum of the JCS on Counter-Insurgency Operations in Laos, stated that, in view of the existing crisis in Laos, he did not believe "our people on the spot" should be pressed to assume a task that could not be implemented (see items 23 September and 5 October 60). The plan was nevertheless being sent to Ambassador Brown for "possible future use." He felt certain, said the Secretary of State, that "if and when" the Laotian situation was stabilized, agreement could be reached between the State and Defense Departments on a joint message along the lines suggested by the JCS.

(TS) N/H of JCS 1992/842, 25 Oct 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60).

19 Oct

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK view that Souvanna and his plan to negotiate settlement with the Pathet Lao was the "only possible and practical course" for Laos. The UK appreciated the US desire to balance pro-Communist pressures on Souvanna, but had little regard for, and even less confidence in, Phoumi. The British had "little faith" in the Laotian King, and feared that Souvanna's failure might result in greater Pathet Lao influence. The UK believed that Kong Le was supporting Souvanna who desired to establish a neutral Laos not under Pathet Lao domination. But Kong Le might not continue this support, the UK warned, if there should be an attempt to reinstate Phoumi, whom Kong Le considered "corrupt and beyond the pale."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1920, 21 Oct 60.

21 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US was opposed to UN consideration of the Laotian situation. Such action could cause the US great embarrassment and would allow the Soviet Bloc to portray the implementation of US policy in Laos as a case of intervention in the internal affairs of Laos and contrary to the spirit and letter of the UN Charter. Accordingly, the Secretary instructed the Ambassador to express US opposition to an appeal by Laos to the UN.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 440, 21 Oct 60.

22 Oct

The Secretary of State, recognizing that the Kong Le group might attempt to take over the government by another coup, invited Ambassador Brown's comments upon the following proposed courses of action:

1. Force by the Laotian Government.
  - a. Place companies of the 2d Paratroop Battalion under officers loyal to Ouane, Phoumi, or Houmphan and order these units to separate posts well away from Vientiane. Order Kong Le out of the country.
  - b. If Kong Le refused to leave, attack him using loyal troops in Vientiane and forces loyal to Ouane, Houmphan, and Phoumi, rapidly concentrated on Vientiane by air from other areas.
2. Persuasion. Seek to persuade Kong Le that his aims could best be achieved by cooperating with the government.
3. Maneuver.
  - a. Convince Kong Le's troops that their leader was being used by the Communists.
  - b. Attempt to isolate the 2d Paratroop Battalion by seeking evidences of support for a strong anti-Pathet Lao line from other Laotian Army units.
  - c. Assign a substantial portion of the 2d Paratroop Battalion away from Vientiane and gradually replace it with loyal troops.



G. Seek a strong and united appeal from respected FAL leaders to the effect that, although the motives of the 2d Paratroop Battalion were understandable, they now injured their country and the FAL.  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 444, 22 Oct 60, CJCS 091(Laos).

24 Oct

A US Embassy officer called on General Phoumi at Savannakhet and informed him of Souvanna's approval of: 1) direct supply for Phoumi's forces; and 2) the distribution of pay through the legal government at Vientiane. The Embassy officer suggested that Phoumi dissolve the Revolutionary Committee; the officer explained that the US had decided to build up the FAL in the Luang Prabang region and to discourage any revolutionary movement against the legal government in Vientiane.

General Phoumi's response was "uniformly negative." He felt that dissolution of the Committee would be meaningless because Souvanna could declare that the Committee members were still in rebellion. He complained that his paymasters would be arrested were they to go to Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 735, 25 Oct 60.

25 Oct

The JCS circulated a memorandum from the CNO to the JCS setting forth the "Views of Leaders of the Republic of China on the Situation in the Western Pacific," including the views of President Chiang-Kai-Shek on the problem of Laos. President Chiang's remarks were reported by the Commander, Seventh Fleet, after a visit to Taiwan 14-20 October 1960. According to the Commander, the substance of Chiang's remarks was:

1) The situation in Laos had reached a very dangerous point and unless the US "takes a firm position soon it may get beyond the point of no return. Everyone is waiting for the United States to take a firm position."

2) Chiang strongly supported General Phoumi's position and suggested that the US give Thailand "unlimited backing and let the Thais handle the details." Such an approach, in Chiang's view, would have the additional advantage of keeping the US from "getting embroiled publicly" with the UK and France.  
(S) JCS 1992/859, 25 Oct 60, JMF 9150/3310  
(22 Oct 60).

26-27 Oct

On 26 October Premier Souvanna informed Ambassador Brown that, unless Thailand lifted the embargo on petroleum products, the Laotian Government would be forced to request the necessary supplies from the Soviet Union.

The Thai Government, in response to the persuasive efforts of Ambassador Johnson, agreed to remove the embargo the next day. This action, the Thai Foreign Minister pointed out, had nothing to do with Souvanna's threat to seek aid from the Soviet Union. (See item 25-29 September 60.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 732, 25 Oct 60, and 752, 27 Oct 60; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 826, 26 Oct 60.



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27 Oct

Ambassador Brown was informed by Souvanna that negotiations seeking to restore legal status to General Phoumi had broken down because of Phoumi's intransigence, attributed by Souvanna to US support of the General.

(S) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 829, 26 Oct 60.

28 Oct

The Secretary of State informed the Ambassador in Laos of a new US plan of action for Laos to be used as "guidance in [the] period ahead." This plan became necessary because Souvanna: 1) had not lived up to the conditions set by the US for continued support (see item 7 October 60); 2) was rapidly losing the support of "all important non-Communist leadership elements in Laos"; 3) was opposed by the King; and 4) therefore would not be able "to pull Army and non-Communist Lao elements together and provide leadership to [the] country in standing up to [the] PL threat."

The new US plan contained the following elements designed to achieve a new Laotian Government without inviting a "desperate reaction by Souvanna . . . against the US" or a "general outbreak of military action by PL forces":

1. "Exfiltrate" a quorum of the National Assembly from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.
  2. Encourage Phoui to go to Luang Prabang at the strategic moment.
  3. In the event of a vote of no confidence in Souvanna by the Assembly, a declaration against him by Quane, or a coup against him by the Kong Le group, Souvanna probably would accept an invitation by the King to go to Luang Prabang for consultations.
  4. At Luang Prabang, Souvanna "would agree" to step down in favor of Phoui who would form a new government including Phoumi and Souvanna.
  5. Such a solution should be acceptable to all non-Communists in Laos as well as to the British, French, Australians, Thais, and Vietnamese.
- (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 466, 28 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

28 Oct

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the Government of the Republic of China's Ambassador to Thailand had informed him of a long talk with Phoui Sananikone, just arrived in Bangkok. According to the Chinese Ambassador, Phoui was willing to work with Phoumi to establish a new Laotian Government. Phoui's plan was to bring about an Assembly session at Luang Prabang, where he would debate Souvanna's policy and seek a vote of confidence from the Assembly. With Phoumi's support, Phoui was confident that such a vote could be won. (See item 29 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 763, 28 Oct 60.

29 Oct

The Ambassador in Laos advised the Secretary of State that Phoui Sananikone, although an "experienced and proven pro-West and anti-Communist political leader," had jeopardized his present usefulness by sharp past differences with the King and Phoumi. The Ambassador felt, therefore, that the US should proceed cautiously in any encouragement of Phoui's proposed course of action. (See item 28 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 847, 29 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

29 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported that Souvanna had retreated somewhat from his intransigent attitude on talks with Phoumi and had sent a cordial message to Phoumi suggesting that paymasters be sent to Vientiane to collect the pay for Phoumi's forces.

The Premier also professed willingness to accept representatives of Phoumi into the Government, provided that members of the NLHX were admitted also. The Ambassador protested vigorously, saying such a policy would lead to disaster for Laos and would cost Souvanna the support of the US which could not afford to support a Government including "persons directed by Communists."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 845, 29 Oct 60.

4 Nov

In a message to Ambassadors Brown and Johnson the Secretary of State agreed that Phoui should "explore the situation and sound out views of key people at Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Savannakhet" in order to: 1) develop a solution to the Laotian problem; and 2) provide a basis for assessing the soundness of the US plan to promote him to the premiership (see item 28 October 60). The Secretary listed recent developments that indicated Souvanna's failure to stem the growing influence of the Pathet Lao in the government: 1) the formation on 31 October of the National Neutrality and Unity Committee with Kong Le as an officer; 2) the "coordination and liaison" with the Pathet Lao on the part of Colonel Kouprasith (a FAL Battalion Commander) in his maneuver to gain control of the forces in the Paksone-Pah Cadinh area; and 3) the recent promotion of several NLHX sympathizers to responsible offices in the royal government.

The Secretary believed that the non-Communist element who feared Souvanna's orientation toward the Pathet Lao would gravitate to Phoui, thereby, Pathet Lao-NLHX influence would be arrested and reversed. The Secretary also reminded the Ambassadors that Phoui's attitude toward Laotian neutrality, and willingness to work with Phoumi, made him most acceptable to the US.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 486, 4 Nov 60; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 788, 3 Nov 60.

5 Nov

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Assistant Secretary of State outlined the US position on the presence of UN representatives in Laos. The US had supported the existence of UN economic and technical advisors in Laos because they served as a deterrent to Communist external aggression and discouraged Communist assistance to internal insurgency. Moreover, UN economic and technical aid assisted in developing Laos as a unified nation (an expressed objective of the US (see item 23 November 60). However, the US had rejected the presence of UN military observers in Laos because it would require action by the Security Council. The US believed any appeal to the Council by Laos at this time, in the absence of any clear-cut case of Communist intervention, "could be most unfortunate" and would lead to an ill-timed general discussion in the UN of the Lao situation. Fearing a direct approach to the Security Council by Souvanna, the Assistant Secretary ordered the Ambassador to report to the Department of State any instructions sent by the UN Secretary General to his representative in Laos in reply to Souvanna's request for military observers.

(S) Msg, AsstSecState to Vientiane, 491, 5 Nov 60.

7 Nov

In a memorandum to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Chairman, JCS, stated his views on the feasibility of using [redacted] officers as advisors to Laotian Battalions. The [redacted] unit that might provide advisors was the [redacted]. If the officers in this unit, said the Chairman, were assigned as advisors to the Laotian Army, even at the rate of one per battalion, in all but two cases the advisors would be equal or lower in rank than the Battalion Commanders; it was virtually certain that Laotian Battalion Commanders would not cooperate fully.

with a junior [redacted] officer. On the other hand, experience indicated that Southeast Asia indigenous forces regard US officers in a better light. The Chairman recommended, therefore, that, in lieu of arranging for the assignment of [redacted] officers to the Laotian Army, steps be taken to arrange for the assignment of US advisors at the battalion level. (See item 2 December 60.)

(TS) JCS 1992/870, 8 Nov 60, JMF 9155 2/9105  
(12 Aug 60).

8 Nov

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reviewed the recent political developments in Laos and made several recommendations to effect a unification of the non-Communist elements. The Ambassador viewed the appearance of Phoui as a possible bridge between Souvanna and Phoumi, and together with the decision of Souvanna and the Assembly to send a delegation to negotiate with the Savannakhet leaders, as the last chance for a negotiated settlement. He recommended that the US: 1) urge Souvanna and his Assembly delegates to propose reasonable conditions for national unification and be willing to accept reasonable proposals from Savannakhet, 2) bring similar pressure to bear on Phoumi and urge him to dissolve his committee and reach a compromise with Souvanna in the formation of a new government; 3) emphasize to Phoui that while the US still regarded him as an "instrument to bring about a Lao solution," he must not disrupt the activities being initiated between Souvanna and Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 889, 8 Nov 60.

9 Nov

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Secretary of State, after again reviewing the growing influence of the Pathet Lao in the Royal Laotian Government (see item 4 November 60), expounded on the existing political and military situation in Laos and on US plans for solving the present crisis. Among his lengthy observations on the existing political and military situation in Laos the Secretary mentioned: 1) the non-Communist element in Vientiane wielded little power; in fact, power in the capital could be determined only by force of arms; 2) appointment of Champa, an opportunist who often voted with the NLHX, as governor of Sam Neua negated US hopes for a new firmness in Souvanna's attitude toward the leftists; 3) Kouprasith, the leader of the pro-Souvanna military group, had worked in liaison with the Pathet Lao and collaborated actively with them; 4) the Pathet Lao remained the most significant single military element in the country; in fact, the leftist military elements were now in "key positions and evidently had complete freedom of action and access to supplies;" and 5) Ouane's presence in Luang Prabang had resulted in confusion among military leaders there, and in a weakening in their resolve to resist the Pathet Lao.

The Secretary outlined the latest US plan: to induce a quorum of the Assembly to meet freely in Luang Prabang to form a new government (see item 28 October 60). Even though this might simply result in a reshuffling of the cabinet and retention of Souvanna as Premier, it could strengthen the anti-Pathet Lao forces. The Secretary expressed the hope that Phoui might still be appointed Premier, but admitted this seemed more remote now. And although Phoumi might be responsible for the

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present political impasse among the non-Communist elements, the Secretary believed him to be an essential anti-Communist counterweight to Souvanna's leftist tendencies. Furthermore, to exert the kind of pressure needed to curb Phoumi would have the gravest repercussions among the anti-Communist nations of Southeast Asia.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 498, 9 Nov 60

10 Nov

The Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Brown to proceed with the implementation of the recently approved US plan to replace Souvanna with Phoui (see item 9 November 60). He ordered the Ambassador to approach the three major parties separately as follows:

1) Phoui should be informed that the US favored his having a free hand in executing his plan for convening a conference of the major non-Communist elements and the US should support him in any reasonable proposal he might make. The development of circumstances leading to his elevation to premiership, however, "should be a purely Lao movement toward Phoui." The part played by the US should be revealed as little as possible.

2) To Souvanna, the Ambassador should express US concern over possible inclusion of NLHX in the cabinet, a move that the US considered "disastrous." He might also express to Souvanna the deep concern of the US over the apparent united front nature of the recently formed Committee of Neutrality since, as proved in other countries, this usually resulted in complete Communist domination.

3) The Ambassador should inform Phoumi that it would be to his advantage to participate in Phoui's discussions. While not revealing to him the US support of Phoui, Corcoran (US official at Savannakhet) could tell Phoumi that the US was inalterably opposed to the inclusion of the NLHX in the government and suggest that if he and Boun Oum made constructive proposals to Assembly delegates, the delegates might be influenced in their favor.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 501, 10 Nov 60.

10 Nov

The Secretary of State informed the US Ambassador in Laos that, since it was now almost certain that continuation of Souvanna as Prime Minister would result in the loss of Laos to the West and a disastrous disillusionment of Thailand and Vietnam, the US was determined to establish a new Laotian Government without Souvanna. To achieve this, the Secretary indicated, the US risked a "reaction" by the Pathet Lao backed by international Communism, and trouble with its allies France and the UK. However, it had come to the reluctant conclusion that "risks should be faced now rather than later when they might have to be faced under yet less favorable circumstances." The Secretary still hoped the change in government might be accomplished through the efforts of Phoui "along the lines" of previous US plans (see item 28 October 60). The Secretary stated, however, that the US was determined to proceed with whatever courses would be open to it if plans involving Phoui should fail.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 502, 10 Nov 60.

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11 Nov

Following the defection of the capital garrison under Major Baunpheun Isixiengmay to the Rightist camp, the royal capital of Luang Prabang fell to the Phoumi faction in a bloodless coup.

On the same day in a message to CINCPAC, the JCS warned of a possible airborne counterattack by Kong Le against Luang Prabang, and ordered CINCPAC to watch developments closely with a view to taking any feasible action to deny to Kong Le resources in aircraft and POL. (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 11 Nov 60, DA-OUT 985720, JCS Secretariat; NYT, 12 Nov 60, 1; AP, 11 Nov 60.

14 Nov

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna planned to attack Luang Prabang. Since Phoumi had not responded to his offer for negotiation (see item 8 November 60) and continued to conspire against the Royal Laotian Government, Souvanna declared he had no alternative but to use force to establish the legal government's authority in the royal capital. He informed Ambassador Brown that he would not collaborate with the Pathet Lao in this operation, but at the same time, he would be unable to prevent the Pathet Lao from attacking Phoumi elsewhere. Souvanna also informed the Ambassador that in view of Phoumi's intransigence, the Premier might have to reconsider the government's policy on US aid to Phoumi.

The Ambassador pointed out to the Secretary that if Souvanna carried out his threat to attack, it would place the US in the position of openly supporting a rebel force against the legal government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 925, 14 Nov 60.

16 Nov

Ambassador Brown submitted several recommendations to the Secretary of State regarding US aid to Laos. The Ambassador urged that: 1) the US should continue to oppose an attack by Phoumi on Vientiane (unless the Pathet Lao initiated an offensive against that city), and should refuse to support him in any action against Vientiane or Luang Prabang, such as an airlift for his troops, unless and until the King established a new government favored by the US; 2) if requested, the US should provide equipment and supplies for the anti-Pathet Lao forces under Kouprasith's personal control, with adequate supervision by the PEO; and 3) in view of the weak position of Phoumi, the "lukewarm" reaction of Phoumi to a national coalition of anti-Communists, and the "spinelessness" of the King, the US should "sit tight" in Laos, at least until the attitudes of Ouane and Kouprasith were clarified.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 935, 16 Nov 60.

16 Nov

The 13th Conference of SEATO military advisors met in Bangkok to agree on a revision of defense plans to meet Communist internal threats in the treaty area. The representative of Thailand, who had been urging SEATO action in Laos since the 9 August coup, contended that SEATO's present defense plans were based on "a pro-Western Laos and therefore are now outmoded." He admitted that his government's faith in the alliance had been "shaken a lot" by recent events in Laos and that it was "watching the attitude adopted by SEATO in the immediate future." The US representative, Admiral

Felt (CINCPAC), assured the conference that US forces in the Pacific "stand ready to come to the aid of the alliance and will fight to protect the independence of the free men in Asia." (See item 12 December 60.)  
AP, 17, 18 Nov 60; Deadline Data.

16 Nov

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that it appeared clearly unlikely that the King would convene a three-party conference in Luang Prabang as advocated by Phoui and the US (see item 9 November 60). Moreover, the Ambassador interpreted the current trend in Laos as being strongly in favor of a Phoumi government. He also reported that military action at this time was improbable since Souvanna had sent Ouane (lately replaced as Commander in Chief by the King) to Savannakhet to attempt further negotiations with Phoumi. For his part, Phoumi had assured the US that he was not going to attack Vientiane at the present time. The Ambassador also indicated that the two major uncertainties in the Laotian situation were the loyalties of Ouane and Kouprasith.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 935, 16 Nov 60.

17 Nov

General Ouane Rathikone, the former commander of the FAL, announced his defection to the rightist regime of General Phoumi Nosavan. Premier Souvanna placed the blame for these defections on US moral and military support of Phoumi.

AP, 17 Nov 60; NYT, 20 Nov 60.

18 Nov

The Royal Laotian Government issued a communique announcing the signing of a preliminary agreement with the Pathet Lao calling for: 1) the immediate arrangement of a cease-fire between the Pathet Lao and Royal Government forces; 2) the formation of a government of national unity that would include representatives of the NLHX as well as of the Phoumi group. The communique also announced that the Royal Government intended to accept aid from China and North Vietnam, to dispatch good will missions to these countries for the exchange of economic and cultural relations, and to undertake "good neighborly relations with Peoples of China."

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 950, 18 Nov 60,  
NYT, 19 Nov 60, 1.

19 Nov

Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Department of State a French diplomatic representative's flat admission that France could see as a solution in Laos only a national union government, including NLHX. The French saw no reason for the removal of Souvanna; but if this eventuality should occur, the French would reject Phoui as a successor, and put forward as their candidate Pheng Phongsavan.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 955, 19 Nov 60.

21 Nov

After consultation with the Department of State, the JCS ordered CINCPAC to remove all restraints on military operations by Phoumi in the event government troops attacked Luang Prabang, and to support him if he proved willing to fight. The JCS also ordered CINCPAC to furnish all necessary CAT aircraft for Phoumi's operations.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 21 Nov 60, DA-OUT 986140, JCS Secretariat.



~~TOP SECRET~~

21 Nov

Premier Souvanna Phouma informed Ambassador Brown that as a result of his successful negotiations with the Pathet Lao (see item 18 November 60), he was requesting the King to assemble in Luang Prabang, under a guarantee of safe conduct, representatives of the Phoumi faction, the Pathet Lao, and the Royal Government in order to form a national unity government. Although Souphanouvong (leader of the Pathet Lao) had refused to collaborate with Phoumi and Boun Oum personally, Souvanna assured the Ambassador that a place would be found in the new government for Phoumi.

In the same conversation with the Ambassador, the Premier defended his policy of accepting aid from China and North Vietnam: "it was a consistent policy of the government that it would accept aid from any source if offered without strings." He admitted, however, that this did not imply diplomatic relations with either country. He defined his "good neighbor relations with China" as simply border trade and official contacts to handle border incidents. The Premier also claimed that the northeast city of Sam Neua had been returned to the control of his government by the Pathet Lao, but admitted that he had left Pathet Lao officials in charge.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 968, 21 Nov 60.

23 Nov

In a formal note delivered to Ambassador Brown, the Royal Laotian Government requested the immediate cessation of all US aid to the rebel forces of General Phoumi Nosavan. The note declared the existing US policy of supporting the Phoumi rebellion contrary to the objectives of the three power ministerial meeting of 23 September (see item), which affirmed the legality of the Souvanna government and pledged the preservation of Laotian territorial unity. The note charged that the US aid to Phoumi encouraged the rebellion and thus endangered Laotian unity.

(C) Vientiane to State, 973, 23 Nov 60.

23 Nov

In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC argued that at least one Phoumi military victory was required as a pre-condition to any acceptable political solution of the Laotian problem. Without such a victory, he warned, the political solution sought by the US was doomed to failure because Souvanna and Souphanouvong could outmaneuver any of the anti-Communist leaders in their discussions scheduled to take place before the King (see item 21 November 60). Moreover, the restrictions placed on Phoumi's military operations by the US State Department could assure Souvanna a military as well as a political victory at Luang Prabang. To avoid this "king-sized booby trap for the anti-Communist forces," CINCPAC urged that the US: 1) remove all restrictions placed on Phoumi's forces so that Souvanna could not proceed with impunity in his political and military maneuvering, 2) as an absolute minimum, allow Phoumi to initiate attacks in support of his forces in Luang Prabang; and 3) continue to stall on Souvanna's request for cessation of US support to Phoumi. (See item 2 December 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 23 Nov 60, 498, JCS Secretariat.



~~TOP SECRET~~  
24 Nov

At the request of Souvanna Phouma, a US mission flew to Luang Prabang to persuade the King to call a conference of all national elements as suggested by the Premier. (See item 21 November 60.)  
NYT, 25 Nov 60, 6.

25 Nov

The Associated Press reported that Premier Souvanna Phouma had moved his forces from Vientiane to a position 65 miles south of Luang Prabang, but was withholding orders to attack until a decision was made by the King concerning the proposed meeting of all national elements. (See items 14 and 21 December 60.)  
AP, 25 Nov 60.

26 Nov

The Secretary of State transmitted to Ambassador Brown the US reply to the Royal Laotian Government's note of 22 November (see item), for delivery to the Prime Minister on 28 November. The note reaffirmed the US desire to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of Laos and characterized US aid to Laos since 1957 as an effort to insure this objective. It defended its support of Phoumi by referring to the agreement between Ambassador Brown and Souvanna Phouma on 19 October (see item) which provided that the US could furnish aid directly to regions outside Vientiane. Moreover, the note requested a clarification of the terms "rebels" and "all aid" mentioned in the Laotian note. (If the term "rebel" was meant to be interpreted in its broadest sense, the note pointed out, US aid would be denied to four-fifths of the kingdom. If this occurred, the note asked, how could national reconciliation be brought about?)

The Ambassador was also instructed to inform Souvanna orally that: 1) in recent informal meetings the foreign ministers of the US, UK, and France had discussed the Laotian problem and had agreed on common objectives in their policy toward that nation; 2) contrary to Souvanna's claim, the denial of US aid to the Savannakhet forces would have resulted in the establishment of a revolutionary government many months ago; and 3) the civil war Souvanna charged the US with inciting in Laos was being prevented at this time only through the efforts of the US, which was helping "patriotic Lao find a basis of agreement."

In a covering message to Ambassador Brown the Secretary of State admitted that the US faced a dilemma: the Laotian note could not be disregarded, but at the same time the US could not abandon the anti-Communist forces in Laos. The US note represented a temporizing action until the removal of Souvanna could be effected. The Secretary also promised to inform the UK, France, and Australia, in order to enlist their aid in warning Souvanna of the dangers inherent in his present policy. (See item 26 November 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 557, 26 Nov 60.

26 Nov

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown of the results of US meetings with UK, French and Australian representatives concerning US-Laotian exchange of notes (see items 23 and 26 November 60). The US had asked its allies to use their good offices with Souvanna to change his present course of action,

stressing Souvanna's isolation (he had only nominal control of Vientiane), and his increasing dependence on the Pathet Lao internally and on Communist aid internationally. The US had claimed that its efforts had so far prevented civil war, the secession of the of the Savannakhet leadership, and the establishment of a revolutionary government. The US also had warned of the far reaching consequences to Laos and all South-east Asia if Souvanna persisted in his request that the US cut off all aid to four-fifths of Laos.

In reply to the US request: 1) France had indicated that it still supported Souvanna as the only hope of a peaceful settlement of the Laotian problem, 2) Australia had mentioned its continued opposition to Phoumi who, it believed, should be supporting Souvanna, and 3) the UK had agreed to influence Souvanna to call off his attack on Luang Prabang, but had refused to use its influence to alter his other actions.

(S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane et al, 558, 26 Nov 60.

26 Nov

It was reported that King Savang Vathana rejected the conference proposed by Souvanna, consisting of all Laotian political elements (see items 21 and 24 November 60).

Souvanna's troops were marching on the royal capital but many were defecting to Phoumi's rebels.  
NYT, 27 Nov 60, 10.

26 Nov

The Royal Laotian Government lodged a formal protest with Thailand over the continued blockade of the Lao kingdom (see item 26 October 60). The Government claimed that the Thai blockade was "throttling the economy of Vientiane and other areas."  
AP, 26 Nov 60

28 Nov

The French Charge at Washington delivered his government's reply to the Department of State's request for its good offices in persuading Souvanna to resign (see item 26 November 60). The French declined the US request.

While the French were not enthusiastic about Souvanna's recent pro-Communist actions (see item 9 November 60), they disagreed with the US assessment of Phoumi's strength. Rejecting the US contention that Phoumi commands the allegiance of four-fifths of Laos, the French submitted that the majority of Laotians were profoundly neutralist, and only a few officers and officials were controlled by Phoumi. Moreover, the French believed Souvanna's recent pro-Communist bent ascribable to the sealing off of other courses by Savannakhet's belligerence.

(S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane, 562, 29 Nov 60.

30 Nov

In a speech before the lower house of parliament, Prime Minister Nehru reaffirmed his government's support of Souvanna Phouma and declared that the only way to save Laos would be to exclude the influence of the major powers, who were introducing the cold war into Southeast Asia.

(U) New Delhi to SecState, G-307. 30 NOV 60.

30 Nov

In a message to the JCS CINCPAC warned that the meeting of the Lao assembly in Luang Prabang which the US had been supporting (see item 9 November 60), might result in a political stalemate with Souvanna pressing for a coalition government and the Phoumi group demanding the ouster of the Souvanna government. While CINCPAC preferred "an adequate political solution to a military contest," he believed that a political stalemate would be a prelude to renewed military action, and warned that, "our friends in Laos must be in a strong military posture in order to prevail."

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 30 Nov 60, 6828/TAE/EM, JCS Secretariat.

30 Nov

Ambassador Brown reported a conversation with Souvanna concerning the US note of 28 November (see item 26 November 60), during which Souvanna replied to that note's requests for clarification of the terms "all aid" and "rebels." The "aid" which Souvanna opposed was the supplying of arms and munitions to forces which might turn these supplies against his regime. Souvanna obviously included Phoumi in this category of potential insurrectionists against his regime; while he did not classify Phoumi as "rebel," Souvanna pointedly omitted Savannakhet when he defined "loyal" areas. The only areas which Souvanna considered loyal were Phong Saly, Sam Neua, and Vientiane.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 1024, 30 Nov 60.

1 Dec

At a meeting in Washington between British and French representatives and Under Secretary of State Merchant it was concluded that the most complete and pressing disparity between these powers' positions was their complete disagreement concerning the feasibility of Pathet Lao representation in any coalition cabinet.

During the discussion, Under Secretary Merchant indicated that the US assessment of the military situation was that the anti-Communist forces were now "substantially superior" in capability and morale than in previous months.

(S) SecState to Vientiane, 582, 2 Dec 60.

2 Dec

The JCS ordered CINCPAC to restrict Phoumi's military operations until further notice. CINCPAC could continue, however, the cautious use of CAT aircraft to supply Luang Prabang "as unobtrusively as possible." The Departments of State and Defense had concurred that Phoumi should defend and consolidate any positions he occupied north of the Nam Ca Dinh River and should clear the enemy from positions south of the river. The JCS informed CINCPAC, however, that should the RLG/PL forces attack Luang Prabang, the above restrictions on Phoumi should be immediately rescinded. (See item 23 November 60.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 936730, 2 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

2 Dec

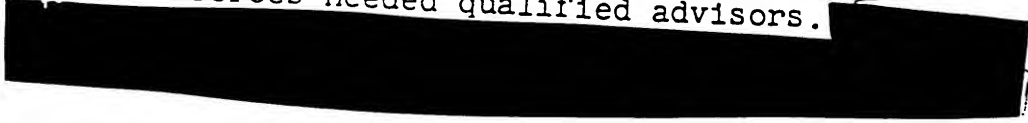
In response to the 7 November memorandum of the Chairman, JCS (see item), the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs stated that although he agreed with the objective of making Laotian battalions fully effective, he did not think the Chairman's proposal concerning the assignment of US advisors to the battalions was "practicable at this time." The Under Secretary's principal reasons for his negative reply were as follows:

1) Laotian leaders could be expected to be unreceptive to the proposal.

2) The assignment of US personnel to combat units whose legal status was equivocal presented an unacceptable risk; moreover, the "legal government" would have strong grounds for accusing the US of intervention; and the capture or killing of US personnel under these circumstances would have "most serious international consequences, not the least of which would be to offer the Vietminh a ready excuse to intervene militarily."

3) No action like that proposed by the Chairman should be taken until "there is a new unified government with which we can work across the board and throughout the country"; even then there would remain the problem of the Geneva Agreement which prohibited the entry of foreign military personnel into Laos except as specified (see Introduction).

Nevertheless, said the Under Secretary, the State Department shared the Chairman's view that Phoumi's forces needed qualified advisors.



[REDACTED]

(TS) Memo, UnderSecState for Pol Aff to CJCS,  
"Advisors for Battalions of the Lao Army," 2 Dec 60,  
JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

3 Dec

Ambassador Brown relayed to the Secretary of State the substance of a conversation with Souvanna in which Souvanna claimed that the mission of Somsanith to Savannakhet to persuade Phoumi to attend a conference in Luang Prabang (see item 21 November 60), had produced encouraging results. Phoumi ostensibly had agreed that a national unity government including NLHX was necessary and that strict neutrality must be the position of such a government. A Savannakhet delegation had been invited to Vientiane for further negotiations.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 1049, 3 Dec 60.

4 Dec

CINCPAC again advocated to the JCS that restrictions on Phoumi's actions be raised. He pointed out that Souvanna's latest maneuver, substituting a meeting of the Assembly in Vientiane for the one planned in Luang Prabang, placed the Assembly under Kong Le's guns and insured an outcome favorable to Souvanna. He warned that the restriction of Phoumi gave Souvanna a significant advantage. In CINCPAC's view, Ambassador Brown should protest Souvanna's decision to convene the Assembly in Vientiane; increased pressure by Phoumi would lend obvious support to the Ambassador's protestations, and in this manner Souvanna might be foiled in his attempt to constitute a government which would include NLHX.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA-IN 2311, 4 Dec 60,  
JCS Secretariat.

6 Dec

Ambassador Brown transmitted to the State Department the Royal Laotian Government's official reply to the US note of 28 November (see item 26 November). After appropriate expressions of gratitude, the Laotian Government nonetheless declared that:

. . . in view of the present domestic situation that has developed in the Kingdom since the month of November, 1960, [US aid] could not be continued without serious danger unless it were readapted to the situation.

While financial, economic, technical, and medical aid were welcomed for all of Laos, the Laotian Government demanded that military aid be restricted to "troops that remain loyal to the legal government" (see item 30 November).

On the same day, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to reply orally to Souvanna's note. The Ambassador was ordered to inform Souvanna that:

1. No arms or ammunition had been brought into Laos since Souvanna's oral explanation to Ambassador Brown on 30 November 60 (see item).

2. Since the US considered Phoumi an essential deterrent to a Pathet Lao and Viet Minh takeover in Laos, it requested assurances that no "procedural obstacles" would be interposed by the Royal Laotian Government to the supply of food, clothing, pay, medicine, and gasoline to the Savannakhet forces. Moreover, any moderating US influence upon Phoumi was contingent upon continued US assistance, and if denied this assistance, Phoumi might resort to desperate action leading to civil war.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1064, 6 Dec 60; SecState to Vientiane, 595, 6 Dec 60.

7 Dec

Colonel Kouprasith informed the US Army Attache in Vientiane that a coup d'etat would commence in Vientiane in the early morning of 8 December. Kouprasith also revealed that General Phoumi was being kept informed of all developments, and that a force air-lifted from Savannakhet was expected to participate. (See item 8 December 60.)

(S) Msg, CSA to JCS, unnumbered, 7 Dec 60, CJCS 091 (Laos,

7 Dec

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Phoumi's forces were advancing towards Vientiane, and that plans for a Phoumi coup were well advanced within Vientiane. That the Government forces were aware of the imminence of attack was manifested by intensive security precautions.

The successful "exfiltration" of a quorum of assembly members from Vientiane (see item 9 November 60) thus was becoming increasingly impracticable. The military developments were diminishing chances for an early favorable political solution. Ambassador Brown foresaw the predicament of two existing and distinct governments in Laos--one supported by a lonely US, the other supported by "everybody else."

Ambassador Brown nonetheless agreed that the present course of a Phoumi advance together with an engineered coup was the best of the several unsatisfactory alternatives.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1081, 7 Dec 60.

8 Dec

In the morning hours, an uprising, prearranged by Phoumi and Colonel Kouprasith, endeavored to seize control of Vientiane. Kouprasith issued a statement pledging support to Souvanna's brand of neutralism.

Souvanna, interpreting the coup as support for his regime, cooperated by ordering the restriction, under guard, of leftist elements within Vientiane who were opposing his negotiations with Phoumi. In a related move, Souvanna also stripped Kong Le of his military power.

(S) DIB, 8 Dec 60, J-2 Files; NYT, 9 Dec 60, 1.

8 Dec

The Chief of Staff, Army, recommended to the Chairman, JCS, that the Chairman inform the Under Secretary of State that it was the considered opinion of the JCS that Winthrop Brown should be immediately replaced as Ambassador to Laos. The Chief of Staff, Army, had become increasingly disturbed by the "negative and

defeatist attitude" of the Ambassador who had "consistently negated or hindered the carrying out of US policy in Laos."  
(S) CSAM 430-60, 8 Dec 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

8 Dec

The Chief, PEO, informed CINCPAC that the US Military Liaison Advisor to Phoumi, warning that the rate of Phoumi's buildup at Vientiane was dangerously slow and that the risk of a successful PL reaction to the pro-Phoumi uprising was increased thereby, had requested Ambassador Brown's permission to use CAT aircraft for the airlift of Phoumi's troops. Ambassador Brown had vetoed the request.

The Chief, PEO, informed CINCPAC that he concurred in Ambassador Brown's decision; the Chief, PEO, agreed that the request "did not meet the criteria [set by] JCS directives."

The Secretary of State approved Ambassador Brown's veto of CAT participation in Phoumi's troop lift into the Vientiane area. Since Phoumi's success depended upon deployment with maximum speed, however, he authorized Brown to use CAT aircraft "where you feel acceptance of additional political risk [was] justified by chances of achieving the result we desire."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 603, 8 Dec 60;  
(S) Msg, CHPEO, Laos to CINCPAC, 9867, 8 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

9 Dec

Kong Le, undeceived by Kouprasith's stratagem of neutral pronouncements (see item 8 December 60), directed a counter-coup that seized control of major portions of Vientiane. Most significantly, Kong Le was in firm command of the Vientiane airfield, and thus in a position to receive massive resupply by Soviet airlift.

Souvanna, now utterly powerless, fled the country during the evening, while Vientiane awaited the approach of Pathet Lao reinforcements for Kong Le from the north and Phoumi columns from the east and west.

(TS) Vientiane to SecState, 1102, 9 Dec 60;  
(U) Vientiane to SecState, 1097, 9 Dec 60; NYT, 10 Dec 60, 1.

11 Dec

Quinim Polsena, pro-Communist Minister of Information in Souvanna's disbanded cabinet, announced his assumption of the premiership. Quinim derived his support from Kong Le's pro-Pathet Lao forces.  
NYT, 12 Dec 60, 1.

11 Dec

The Secretary of State suggested that the US Representative call a special session of the SEATO Council of Representatives to consult on new threats to the Treaty area caused by developments in Laos. The US hoped to extract a statement from the SEATO Council that would put the Communists on notice of SEATO vigilance and provide reassurance to US allies and others in the Treaty area.

At the request of the US Representatives, a meeting of the SEATO Council was held in Bangkok on 15 December 60.

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 835, 11 Dec 60;  
NYT, 16 Dec 60, 1.



12 Dec

In a lengthy cable Ambassador Brown presented the Secretary of State with a list of possible charges that might be brought against US actions in Laos and a corresponding list of detailed answers that might be used to refute these charges.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1143, 13 Dec 60.

12 Dec

The US Ambassador to Cambodia, William C. Trimble, reported that Cambodia, in transmissions to the UN Secretary-General, was continuing to amplify its proposal for a "neutral belt" comprising Cambodia and Laos (see item 29 September 60). Amplification of the suggestion was being provided to the Secretariat General, UN, for discussion purposes.

Cambodia considered that no foreign bases should exist in either country and both countries should proclaim their refusal to participate in any alliance. Bloc and Western nations then should renounce all forms of subversion, open and clandestine. Finally, a UN commission of three authentic neutrals--as distinguished from representatives of the three world groupings--should police this settlement.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 6444 [sic], 12 Dec 60.

12 Dec

The Laotian National Assembly, in session at Savannakhet, voted to dissolve the Souvanna Government (to which Quinim had claimed succession--see item 11 December 60); and, under powers conferred by the King in Royal Ordinance 283, the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet formed a Provisional Government of Laos.

On 13 December information reached Vientiane that King Savang Vathana had withdrawn his support from Quinim. Concurrently, Boun Oum was heading a delegation from Savannakhet to Luang Prabang that expected to receive the King's approval for the formation of a permanent pro-Western government.

Quinim's reply to reports of the King's decision was that he considered the King to be "under duress," and that he himself was under no obligation to obey.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 21 Dec 60; (U) Vientiane to SecState, DA-IN 842248, 13 Dec 60; NYT, 13 Dec 60, 12; 14 Dec 60, 19.

12-13 Dec

Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State the views of Souvanna upon his status vis-a-vis the Laotian Government. Souvanna insisted that he and his cabinet were still the legal government, having merely temporarily vested power in the general staff. Since his government as a whole thus had turned over the reins to the army, Souvanna considered Quinim's use of cabinet rank as the basis for assuming power to be illegal.

Ambassador Trimble urged upon the Department of State the necessity of Souvanna's removal from Phnom Penh before Cambodian Premier Sinhanouk's return from a Bloc tour. Trimble considered that these two men, if together, would encourage each other in anti-Western activities.



Trimble considered that Souvanna's removal to Luang Prabang might be effected if the King convoked the assembly and guaranteed Souvanna's personal safety. On 13 December the Department of State, although considering such a move by the King unlikely, instructed Ambassador Brown to extract similar assurances of safety from Phoumi. The Department of State accepted Trimble's evaluation of the peril of Sinhanouk's influence upon Souvanna and reasoned further that Souvanna, if in Luang Prabang, would be effectively isolated from both Communist diplomats and the world press.

Ambassador Trimble also relayed to the Secretary of State on 13 December the comment by the Secretary General of the Cambodian Foreign Ministry that Cambodia by no means was eager to be an active base of operations for the fleeing Souvanna clique.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 633 13 Dec 60;  
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 660, 12 Dec 60, and 699, 13 Dec 60.

13 Dec

In a note delivered to the US Ambassador the Soviet Government charged the US with a "glaring violation" of Article 12 of the Geneva Conference Declaration of 1954. In support of its charge, the USSR outlined in considerable detail "US intervention in the internal affairs of Laos" by its overt support of the forces in rebellion against the legal government of Laos. The note placed on the US all responsibility for the consequences "which can arise as a result of the aggressive actions of the United States and some of its allies in the SEATO military bloc."

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIX (2 Jan 61), 16-17.

14 Dec

The Laotian Desk Officer of British Foreign Office registered a British evaluation of the Pathet Lao danger and of the Phoumi leadership with a US Embassy official. The British considered that the Pathet Lao could not be defeated militarily, but could be controlled as a political party. Moreover, the British official spoke of the Savannakhet Cabinet as "a disreputable crew."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2563, 15 Dec 60.

14 Dec

The Department of State informed Under Secretary Merchant in Paris that the US had decided not to prefer charges before the Security Council against the Soviet Union for its airlift in Laos. The Department believed the psychological advantage of initiating charges would be outweighed by the likely outcome before the Council where both the US and USSR would receive condemnation for their actions. Moreover, in view of UK and French disenchantment with the present US position, the US could not expect a propaganda victory in the Council. The Department admitted, however, that this did not preclude a US charge being made before the Council should the situation change, or should it become clear that the Soviets or others intended to request a Council meeting on Laos. Meanwhile, the Department requested comments upon the alternative course: that the Laotian Ambassador circulate a note to all UN members calling their attention to Soviet intervention in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, TOSEC 7, 14 Dec 60.

~~TOP SECRET~~

14 Dec Prime Minister Nehru suggested to the co-chairman (the UK and the USSR) of the Geneva Conference that the ICC should be reconvened in Laos. (See items 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, and 28 December 60.)  
(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1259, 15 Dec 60; AP, 14 Dec 60.

14 Dec The JCS notified CINCPAC of the following modifications in Ambassador Brown's instructions: 1) All restrictions were removed on the use of CAT aircraft in support of the Phoumi forces; 2) The King or his Government were to be encouraged to request US aid in any area required; and 3) the Chief, FEO, was to deal directly with Phoumi concerning the conduct of military operations.  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 987223, 14 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

15 Dec Ambassador Trimble forwarded to the Secretary of State the text of Souvanna's statement of his self-conceived position in Laotian politics (see item 12 December 60).

"The government I head has not resigned. I have merely entrusted the General Staff with the Direction of the country temporarily. . . .

". . . the king declared that my government fell on December 9 and entrusted the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet temporarily with governmental powers. . . . Even though the composition of the new cabinet has received royal sanction, we consider it illegal, since it was not established in accordance with constitutional procedures."

The Ambassador reported that Souvanna insisted he was still the head of the government and was unwilling to consider resigning as a patriotic or humanitarian gesture. Souvanna did indicate, however, that he would be willing to serve in a new cabinet "even in a minor capacity such as Secretary of State," but was still convinced that the government must include NLHX representatives.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 580 and 688, 15 Dec 60.

15-16 Dec The JCS informed CINCPAC that "executive decisions," as communicated to the CNO, and others, by the President's Military Aide Brigadier General Goodpaster, "permit[ted]" the following actions to be taken in Laos, "if necessary and requested by Laos":

a. Furnishing a field hospital.

b. Use of Thai aircraft for civil transport (including movement of hospital) or transport of military supplies.

c. Use of United States aircraft to transport either civilian or military supplies.

In addition, the JCS informed CINCPAC that "favorable response" could be expected if the RLG requested the use of Thai aircraft for reconnaissance over Laos.

On the following day, CINCPAC replied to the JCS that the RTAF had only a limited and unreliable capability for photo reconnaissance. CINCPAC considered it preferable

that the Laotians request the US to provide "expert" photo reconnaissance.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987232, 15 Dec 60;  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160233Z Dec 60.

16 Dec British and French representatives in Washington reported to the Department of State that their respective representatives in Phnom Penh were both urging Souvanna to reject the Souphanouvong invitation to go to Sam Neua, the headquarters of the Pathet Lao.

(C) Msg, SecState to London, 3291, 19 Dec 60.

16 Dec Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the Thai Foreign Minister had relayed to the Ambassador the results of Thai aerial reconnaissance at Vientiane. A flight in which Prime Minister Sarit participated observed that the Vientiane airfield had not been damaged by shell fire, as Phoumi claimed. The Thai Foreign Minister reported this observation as corroboration of the Thai contention that Phoumi's artillery was incompetent. More generally, Ambassador Johnson reported that the Thais considered Phoumi undiscerning, complacent, and inexplicably reluctant to accept Thai assistance.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1023, 17 Dec 60.

16 Dec Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Secretary of State a note from Boun Oum declaring the formation under Boun Oum of a new and royally approved government. In the same note Boun Oum requested emergency aid for the population of Vientiane and military and economic assistance for the new regime.

(U) Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 16 Dec 60.

16 Dec In a letter to the JCS, CINCPAC recommended that action "be initiated to reach an agreed United States position on a bilateral MAAG agreement for negotiation with Laos upon formation of a stable government in that country." The Chief, PEO, said CINCPAC, had been seriously handicapped in carrying out his mission by the lack of a bilateral agreement. Further, the fact that PEO personnel performed their duties as civilians had affected adversely PEO's efforts, and resulted in the re-establishment of French influence in Vientiane.

Going on, CINCPAC stated that, "heretofore," political considerations had precluded the establishment of a regular MAAG under the existing agreement among the US, France, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Recent events suggested, however, that to assure the resolution of the chaotic conditions existing in Laos in a manner consonant with US objectives, it was essential that "an orthodox and overt MAAG be established as soon as possible" (see item 23 December 60).

CINCPAC's letter enclosed a draft proposed Bilateral MAAG Agreement with Laos.

On the same day CINCPAC advanced, by cable, additional reasons for a MAAG in Laos. Phoumi was strongly in favor of an orthodox MAAG for Laos, and had been inpatient with US deference to the French position in FAL administration, training, and operations. The removal of French interference would both please Phoumi and facilitate the achievement of US military objectives in Laos.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 2583, 15 Dec 60; (S) JCS 1992/889, 24 Dec 60, both in JMF 9155.2/4060 (16 Dec 60).

16 Dec The JCS, after consulting CINCPAC, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that [REDACTED] four H-34 type helicopters, to be used in Laos by Air America Inc., be approved, and instructions issued for the Navy Department to airlift four Marine helicopters from Okinawa to Bangkok.

(On the same day the JCS informed CINCPAC that the Navy Department had been directed to take the necessary action and ordered CINCPAC to arrange for the airlift of the helicopters.)

(TS) JCSM-570-60, derived from JCS 1992/880, 16 Dec 60; (TS) JCS to CINCPAC, 987420, 16 Dec 60, both in JMF 9155.2/9105 (15 Dec 60).

16-17 Dec After three days of battle, Phoumi's forces expelled Kong Le's troops from Vientiane. The Phoumi troops had penetrated Vientiane on 13 December, the main body having marched from Paksane to join the Kouprasith garrison and a small body of Phoumi paratroops at Camp Chinaimo a few miles east of Vientiane. Sporadic street fighting and extensive artillery bombardments had ensued. On 17 December the Kong Le forces initiated a full withdrawal from the environs of Vientiane; within two days these troops were 32 miles north of the city.

(S) JCS, Joint Staff Intelligence Brief, 14, 15, 16, and 19 Dec 60; NYT, 14 Dec 60, 1, 19; ibid., 15 Dec 60, 1, 11; ibid., 17 Dec 60, 1.

16-17 Dec CINCPAC cabled to the Commanding Generals of the 3rd Marine Division and 315th Air Division an alert directive for the activation of JTF 116 (less elements in CONUS). The operations envisaged for JTF 116 were those contained in CJTF 116, OPLAN 32-60, Change I, Phase II-Laos, Third Alternate Plan. The provisions of this plan were as follows:

- 1) Airlift four Marine battalions from Okinawa to Vientiane;
- 2) Stage one Army battle group through the Philippines or Korat (Thailand) preparatory to air-drop in Laos;
- 3) Airdrop this Army battle group in the Plaine des Jarres, Luang Prabang, or where needed;
- 4) Airland two Marine battalions from Vientiane to reinforce the Army battle group;
- 5) Fly two Marine helicopter squadrons from carriers off Tourane (South Vietnam) via Seno (Laos) or Ubon (Thailand) to Vientiane;
- 6) Sealift the Army Logistical Command to Bangkok;
- 7) Sealift on order an Army Brigade Task Force and two battle groups from Hawaii;
- 8) Provide air support by US Air Force units based in Thailand and the Philippines, Carrier Strike Forces off Tourane, and a Marine air group in Vientiane or Udorn (Thailand).

In his alert directive CINCPAC specifically directed the following:

- 1) the assembly by CJTF 116 (CG, 3rd Marine Division) of the JTF 116 staff; 2) the maintenance by CG, 315th Air Division, of "high gear capability and

capability to respond to airlift requirements"; and 3) the loading of as much "sea tail" logistical backing as possible in available shipping, without, however, the loading of personnel or the alerting of the press.

Phase two of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-60 was the second of four phases. The first, or alert, phase was in continuous operation for Southeast Asia; it provided deterrence to Communist aggression, assistance to the free nations to combat and control Communist activities, and minimization of the time needed to react to more serious contingencies. Phase Two would begin with the identification of an insurgence and with a request for US or SEATO help; in this phase, US troops were to occupy "key areas" (e.g., Vientiane, Seno), freeing indigenous forces to combat the insurrection. This phase would last until the revolt subsided and stability was restored, or until the conflict expanded into overt Communist aggression. Phases Three and Four would be reactions to overt aggression by the North Vietnamese and the Chinese Communists, respectively.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CG's, 3rd Mar Div and 315th Air Div, 162357Z Dec 60; (TS) Annex B: "Concept of Operations," CINCPAC No. 32-59, 16 Dec 59; (TS) Chart 4 Notes on 3rd Alternate Concept, [n.d.]; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, 150406Z Feb 61. All in J-3 SEA Br.

17 Dec In response to the Soviet note of 13 December (see item) the US categorically rejected the charges of intervention in Laos and condemned "in strongest terms" the illegal Soviet delivery of military equipment to the rebels in Laos. The US condemned the Soviet airlift which, under cover of delivering food and petroleum products, had delivered weapons leading "directly to the suffering and chaos which have befallen Laos."

In reply to the Soviet allegation that new weapons had been introduced into Laos, the US answered that these supplies had been provided pursuant to a longstanding agreement with the Royal Laotian Government.

Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV, 2 Jan 61, 15-16.

17 Dec CINCPAC informed the Acting CHPEO, that Phoumi should develop immediately, with a "forceful assist from PEO members," a plan of military operations that would insure the methodical elimination of opposition forces throughout Laos. CINCPAC directed that this plan be transmitted to him by the CHPEO as soon as it had been developed. (See item 23 December 60.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 170351Z Dec 60.

17 Dec Ambassador Thompson reported that the USSR had renewed its support of Souvanna. Earlier, Quinim had been described by the Soviets as "taking power in his hands"; now Quinim was depicted as a minister of the "legal government of Souvanna."

(U) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1448, 17 Dec 60.

17 Dec 60 The JCS cabled CINCPAC as follows:

1. Have checked your proposal for U.S. military

flights [see item 15-16 December 60] with General Goodpaster with following results. General policy expressed at the present is that:

- a. Any flight by military aircraft must result from Lao request, and
- b. Flights can only be made over Lao territory.

2. Insistent that consideration be given first to Thai reconnaissance rather than U.S. In this connection, thought was expressed that if Thais refuse, or performance inadequate, . . . or if JCS determine time lag too great, sympathetic consideration can be expected to a proposal from the JCS that the mission be performed by U.S. military aircraft.

The JCS also informed CINCPAC that they desired him to "stimulate" a Laotian request for either Thai or US reconnaissance over Laos.

In a later message, the JCS informed CINCPAC that reconnaissance in Laos was desired when practicable, since the US might have to make "grave decisions . . . in a big hurry," and would require as much late information as possible for this purpose. The JCS suggested the following means for conducting this reconnaissance, in the order of desirability:

- (1) Laotian aircraft;
- (2) CAT aircraft;
- (3) the camera-equipped attache aircraft (C-47) at Saigon; and
- (4) Air Attache aircraft accredited to Laos.

The JCS authorized the use of CAT flight personnel if CINCPAC deemed such desirable, but stipulated that the Laotian government should request such action if it became necessary to employ these personnel.

The JCS desired, if practicable, photographic and other reconnaissance of Dien Bien Phu from Laotian airspace. The JCS noted that carrier aircraft reconnaissance of North Vietnam had not been requested from "high authority" yet, but would be requested if it appeared necessary.

(On the basis of this authorization, reconnaissance flights by C-47s assigned to Air Attaches in Saigon and Vientiane were initiated - see item 24 March.)

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987431 and JCS 987432, 17 Dec 60; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 172359Z Dec 60.

18 Dec

At CINCPAC's request, the Acting CHPEO at Savannakhet "stimulated" an official request from Phoumi for photo reconnaissance of northern Laos. (See item 17 December 60.)  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 180045Z Dec 60; (TS) Msg, PEO Rep Savannakhet to CINCPAC, DA IN 67769, 19 Dec 60.

- 18 Dec      Conversations between the Secretary of State and British and French Foreign Ministers resulted in agreement that the extraordinary SEATO council session (see item 11 December 60) would not declare its support for the Boun Oum Government. The British had demurred from such a statement because of the questionable constitutionality of the Boun Oum Government; the French planned to inform Souvanna that they held a neutral view on the Government of Laos.
- On the following day, at the close of the Special Session called by the US Representative, the SEATO Council of Representatives announced merely that civilian emergency supplies would be sent to Vientiane.
- (S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, SECTO 10, 16 Dec 60, SECTC 10, 18 Dec 60; NYT, 20 Dec 60, 1.
- 19 Dec      Ambassador Whitney reported to the Secretary of State that the British Foreign Office would move on several fronts immediately to break the diplomatic log jam over Laos. Messages were in preparation to Moscow exhorting the Soviets to discontinue aid to the Pathet Lao, to the British Ambassador to Cambodia directing renewed pressure upon Souvanna to resign, and to the US urging that it dissuade the Thai and Boun Oum Governments from seeking SEATO assistance.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2611, 19 Dec 60.
- 20 Dec      The JCS Laos Situation Report stated that the FAL had launched a drive from Vientiane designed to disperse the "Communist elements" concentrating north of that city.
- (TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 3/60 (20 Dec 60), 9155.2/9108 (60), R&RA.
- 20 Dec      The Acting CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that reconnaissance by one CAT C-47 would commence on 21 December (see item 17 December 60); that the FAL, being occupied by other missions, was unable to perform reconnaissance at that time; and that the possibility of using the Saigon attache aircraft was being considered.
- (TS) Msg, Acting CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 200745Z Dec 60.
- 20 Dec      Ambassador Whitney reported that the British Government had agreed to approach the Soviet Government on reconvening the ICC for Laos if the Boun Oum Government would accept the return of the Commission.
- The UK Ambassador in Laos had been instructed to ascertain Boun Oum's views.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2627, 20 Dec 60.
- 21 Dec      General Phoumi consulted Ambassador Brown on the question of the new Laotian Government's legality. Phoumi said two courses were open: 1) adopt the Revolutionary Committee's line that the constitution had been suspended and the Assembly dissolved, advancing the Royal Ordinance establishing the Provisional Government (see item 12 December 60) as sufficient legal justification for the new government; or 2) request a vote of confidence from the National Assembly through regular procedures.



Ambassador Brown urged Phoumi to adopt the second course of action and seek regular constitutional acceptance in order to frustrate Communist claims of illegality, avoid another Congo situation in Laos, gain the support of the UN Secretary General, and gain the support of the UK, which had indicated its willingness to recognize a constitutionally formed government.

At the same meeting Phoumi announced that he had received several messages from Souvanna requesting a meeting. Although he planned to meet with Souvanna, Phoumi admitted that he intended to wait "until things were somewhat more stabilized."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 21 Dec 60.

21 Dec The State Department received, through the US Ambassador to Cambodia, a resume of conversations between Souvanna and the British Ambassador to Phnom Penh. The British diplomat had suggested that Souvanna resign, but his sympathetic mien in listening to Souvanna's standard solution to Laotian politics unfortunately had given Souvanna to understand that the UK was of like mind.

(C) Phnom Penh to SecState, 730, 21 Dec 60.

21 Dec The US Ambassador to Vietnam, Elbridge Durbrow, reported to the Secretary of State the details of a conversation between the Ambassador and Sopsaisana, the newly appointed Laotian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Sopsaisana was considering possible first moves in his new post, among which were breaking relations with the Soviet Union and forcing the French out of Laos. Ambassador Durbrow discouraged both moves: the first because of the shaky legitimacy of the Boun Oum regime; the second on the contingency of future needs if the Communists engaged in drawn out guerrilla warfare.

As a result of this conversation, Ambassador Durbrow warned the Department of State that Sopsaisana manifested a "proclivity to take precipitous action without thinking through possible repercussions."

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState. 1202, 21 Dec 60

21 Dec Ambassador Whitney reported to the Secretary of State that "the main difference now between US and UK on Laos was that in broadening the base [of the] Boun Oum Government, which all agreed desirable, UK would find acceptable inclusion of Pathet Lao representatives, if that would calm situation, whereas US would not." The British did not share the US view of Kong Le's Communist orientation, but rather considered his alliance with the Pathet Lao to be a military expedient.

On the same day the British Counselor in Washington revealed to a Department of State official that "the UK had not been opposed to NLHX in Cabinet under Souvanna but [the] situation now different and believed unwise [to] have Communists in Cabinet."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2640, 21 Dec 60;  
(C) Msg, SecState to London, 3326, 21 Dec 60.



22 Dec

The Secretary of State concurred in Ambassador Brown's view that the Boun Oum Government must receive Assembly approval (see item 21 December 60), but declared that the problem of Souvanna's presence in Phnom Penh presented an even greater problem to Western plans. He warned the Ambassador that a Souvanna resignation now would lend credence to Souvanna's pretention that he had remained in office after 12 December. The Secretary suggested that Souvanna somehow be persuaded "to step aside following and understanding with the King that his powers in fact ended with the formation of the provisional government." The Secretary also believed that Phoumi should respond to Souvanna's approaches and should consider offering Souvanna some position, perhaps an ambassadorship or minor cabinet post (see item 15 December 60). This, the Secretary claimed, would "have a devastating effect on the posture of Bloc and others as to continuing legality of his 'Government.'" (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 659, 22 Dec 60.

22 Dec

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that he suggest [REDACTED] actions to be taken for the purpose of alleviating U.S. military intervention and assisting the Laotian Government in defeating Pathet Lao Forces." With their communication the JCS included a draft memorandum from the Secretary of Defense [REDACTED] stating that Communist aerial resupply and support provided insurgents in Laos was of grave concern to the Department of Defense. If permitted to continue "without inhibition," these operations could be a vital factor in the final outcome of the conflict; also, these operations "could possibly lead to a requirement for U.S. military intervention." [REDACTED]

(On 27 December the JCS were informed that the Deputy Secretary of Defense, after adding a statement to the effect that any action contemplated [REDACTED] implementing the suggestion of the JCS should be referred to the Department of State for approval, had on 23 December requested [REDACTED] action along the lines suggested by the JCS.)

(TS) JCSM-579-60 to SecDef, 22 Dec 60, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/888; (TS) Memo, Dep Asst to SecDef (Spec Oper) to CJCS, 27 Dec 60, quoted in (TS) N/H of JCS 1992/888, 30 Dec 60. All in 9155.2/9105 (21 Dec 60).

22 Dec

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Secretary approve and forward to the Secretary of State a list of the following types of military assistance that, subject to validation of specific requests, the US would continue to furnish to the Laotian Government:

a. Communication equipment as required to allow complete freedom of action for RLG forces.

b. Medical aid as required.

c. Engineer equipment and personnel.

d. Airlift of personnel and equipment.

e. Increased logistical support particularly in the areas of arms and ammunition, tanks, and mobile artillery.

The JCS pointed out that additional measures would be required if the rebels received "substantial support" from Communist sources, or overt Communist intervention occurred.

The JCS also stated in their memorandum that there still existed the potential threat of North Vietnamese intervention; confirmed intelligence indicated that Kong Le forces were being supplied by Communist air drop; and the link-up of Kong Le forces with those of the Pathet Lao "could present a formidable obstacle" to the achievement of US objectives in Laos. The JCS believed that the situation required decisive and expeditious action, and that the US should "express in concrete terms its intent to block further Communist encroachment in Southeast Asia generally and in Laos specifically." Accordingly, the JCS felt that the response to the recent Laotian Government formal request for US assistance (see item 15 December 60) should make clear the determination of the US to support friendly governments. In conclusion the JCS requested that the Laotian Government be informed in the formal US response of the assistance the US would continue to provide. (See item 30 December 60.)

(TS) JCSM-580-60, derived from JCS 1992/882, 22 Dec 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (20 Dec 60).

22 Dec In a note to the UK, the USSR requested a revival of the 1954 Geneva Control Commission (the ICC) to consider the Laotian situation. The note suggested that the UK and the Soviet Union "address a message to the United States asking it to assist in the efforts of the two chairmen to normalize the situation." It further charged the US with "crude interference" in Laos.

NYT, 24 Dec 60, 3.

23 Dec India appealed for US support in reviving the three-power International Supervisory Commission (ICC) in Laos. The Commission, composed of India, Canada, and Poland, had been established in 1954 to oversee provisions of the Geneva Conference. At the request of the Laotian Government it had been suspended in July 1958.

Also on 23 December the Department of State presented to Ambassador Brown its objection to the reconvening of the ICC/Laos: i.e., that the ICC as an independent entity would have no restrictions on the subjects it might choose to investigate. A graceful exit was afforded by the fact that the Laotian Government in any event, would not invite the ICC to investigate on these terms.

The Department of State suggested a counter-proposal which might work to the advantage of the US.

The ICC might be reconvened with a limited jurisdiction--the investigation of specific Laotian complaints. Then Laos could complain specifically and solely about the illegal introduction of arms to rebel elements.

The advantages seen in this plan were several:  
1) the impression of US flexibility and moderation;  
2) the impression that the US had nothing to hide;  
3) the opportunity to emphasize the continuing Communist threat to Laos; 4) the gain in stature which the Boun Oum Government would receive if its offer were accepted by the ICC.

The disadvantages were also numerous: 1) the difficulty of persuading the Laotian Government to invite the ICC; 2) the difficulty in preventing the Communist member, Poland, from expanding the investigation to counter-complaints; 3) the status conferred on the rebels in the recognition of their presence as an element in Laos; 4) the equivocal nature of the Indian position; and 5) the possibility that evidence, however specious, against Thailand and US might be accepted by a too scrupulously neutral Indian chairman.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 674, 23 Dec 60;  
NYT, 24 Dec 60, 1.

23 Dec In reply to CINCPAC's demand for a general operational plan (see item 17 December 60), the PEO Representative at Savannakhet cabled CINCPAC the outline of a three-phase Phoumi plan. Phase I of the plan would disperse and destroy the enemy forces in the mountainous area between Luang Prabang and Vientiane by 31 January 1961; Phase II would regain control of Sam Neua Province by 31 March 1961; and Phase III would regain control of Phong Saly Province by 31 May 1961. Throughout these phases, anti-guerrilla operations would be conducted by auto-defense forces and Meo irregulars.

(S) Msg, PEO Rep Savannakhet to CINCPAC,  
DA IN 71509, 23 Dec 60.

23 Dec The JCS suggested to CINCPAC the deployment of an Intelligence Mobile Training Team (MTT) to Laos. After stating that an effective military intelligence organization would be an important factor in the efforts of the Laotian military forces, the JCS informed CINCPAC that the US Army was prepared to furnish promptly a four- to eight-man team, and requested him to advise them whether or not he desired such a group (see item 7 January 61).

(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987702, 23 Dec 60.

23-24 Dec CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the RLG develop a "minimum military air capability" to exercise its right to the control of Laotian air space. To this end, CINCPAC recommended the following courses of action:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] 3) a contract with Air America for maintenance of the T-6's; 4) an announcement by the RLG, as soon as five Laotian pilots had become proficient in the T-6, that no further intervention by foreign aircraft would be

tolerated and that Lao pilots would be ordered to shoot down intruders; and 5) a "try to bag a few birds"--even an unsuccessful attempt would be enough, according to CINCPAC, to "discourage" the enemy. CINCPAC also advocated the use of T-6's for reconnaissance and for attacks against Pathet Lao artillery and trucking.

On the following day, the JCS informed CINCPAC that his recommendations had been favorably received. The JCS authorized CINCPAC to proceed immediately with 1) above; however, the JCS noted that full State Department concurrence had not yet been obtained and ordered that the courses of action advocated in 2) through 5) above be held in abeyance for the present (see item 27 December 60). On 25 December, CINCPAC ordered CHPEO to secure the requisite Phoumi - Sarit agreement (see item 28 December 60).

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 232339Z Dec 60;  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987781, 24 Dec 60;  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 69734, 25 Dec 60.

24 Dec British, French, and American representatives in Washington agreed that, until Souvanna had either resigned or been readmitted to the Laotian Government, it would be useless to suggest that the Soviets cease arms shipment.

(S) SecState to London, 3353, 24 Dec 60.

25 Dec In his first press interview in Cambodia Souvanna announced that he had contacted both Souphanouvong and Boun Oum requesting a conference in Phnom Penh to arrange a cease-fire in Laos. He claimed Souphanouvong had already agreed. Noting that his repeatedly proposed plan for a national coalition had the support of the UK and France, Souvanna warned the US that only this plan offered the promise that "the communization of Laos within a few years" could be prevented.

(U) Msg, Phnom Pehn to SecState 751, 25 Dec 60.

25 Dec The US Ambassador in Moscow reported his belief to the Secretary of State that the Soviets had built up a considerable feeling of righteousness about the cause of their Laotian allies beyond strict considerations of national interest.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1492, 25 Dec 60.

25 Dec In a message to the Secretary of State the US Ambassador in London defended Nehru's proposal to reconvene the ICC without limited jurisdiction (see item 14 December 60). He listed the following advantages: 1) it would improve US "posture" in the eyes of the Indians and other Asian neutrals; 2) it would facilitate UK efforts to cooperate with the US in Laos by answering the government's domestic critics; 3) if Souvanna could be "de-legalized" at the same time, it would create a dilemma for the Soviets: either they must oppose the returning ICC or be indicted for illegally supplying the rebels; and 4) the ICC in Laos could conceivably be of some help as it had been in Vietnam, despite the difficulties posed by the Poles and the Indians.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 2662, 25 Dec 60.

26 Dec The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State the current French attitude on possible solutions to the Laos dilemma. The French felt that any non-Communist coalition must include all non-Communist political elements, including Souvanna. The French considered that otherwise the continued alienation of Souvanna's still formidable following and the understandable Soviet and Viet Minh apprehension concerning an obviously pro-Western regime would leave all Laotian problems unsolved. For the French, a genuinely neutral government, perhaps "sympathetic" to the West, was the only possible solution.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2606, 26 Dec 60.

26 Dec Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State his Country Team's judgment against the reconvening of the ICC in Laos (see item 14 December 60):

1) Reconvening the ICC would provide a tremendous psychological boost for the Communists and the Pathet Lao/NLHX, who had been incessantly demanding its return. Conversely, such action would "discourage if not shake to its very foundations the present Royal Laotian Government."

2) If reconvened, the ICC would eventually be forced to investigate charges against the US and Thailand. "It should not be necessary," the Ambassador warned, "to emphasize our vulnerability and [the] extreme importance [of the] avoidance such a possibility."

3) ICC scrutiny would be likely to impair US capacity to render necessary military support and training to the RLG. Though the current Soviet intervention was serious, the Ambassador believed ICC interference with US military efforts in Laos would be even more perilous.

4) In spite of the recognized difficulties, the Country Team preferred a Laotian appeal to the Security Council where, even though the charges would be subject to Soviet veto, the publicity would force a halt to the Soviet airlift.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1180, 26 Dec 60;  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 6275, 28 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

27 Dec The Department of State informed Ambassador Brown of the "Joint State-Defense concept" to proceed with all actions immediately necessary to implement CINCPAC's 23 December proposal for a Laotian air capability (see item 23-24 December 60). For the purpose of providing a political basis for CINCPAC's plan, Ambassador Brown was ordered to urge the RLG to: (1) formally protest the illegal Soviet airlift; (2) instruct the Lao UN delegation to circulate a memorandum to other delegations setting forth the facts of Soviet violations; and (3) issue a statement that if violations continued the RLG would be forced to take steps to defend its airspace. In addition, Ambassador Brown was to insure that Phoumi understood the envisaged plan and that Phoumi was informed that the US would consider favorably a request for 10 armed T-6's upon the actualization of the proper political

basis. (See item 7 January 61.)

(On the same day the JCS provided CINCPAC with a copy of this message.)

(TS) SecState to Vientiane, 688, 27 Dec 60.

27 Dec The US Ambassador to India reported to the Secretary of State as "practically certain" that India would reject any US proposal to limit the jurisdiction of the ICC (see item 23 December 60). Since India considered US activities in Laos "provocative" and had not accepted the Boun Oum Government, it would never accept such a proposal. India would consider the US proposal a cold war measure, the Ambassador warned, "obviously designed only to expose USSR contravention of Geneva accords."

The Ambassador listed several possible advantages accruing to the US if the ICC were reconvened on India's terms: 1) The ICC would keep an eye on Laos-South Vietnam border and so limit Viet Minh infiltration into Vietnam; 2) The presence of the ICC might frustrate Soviet attempts to reconvene the Geneva Powers (see item 22 December 60); 3) If the ICC could convince Kong Le of Laotian neutrality, he might defect from the Pathet Lao; and 4) US prestige in India would rise, and India would be at least partially convinced that the US was "now more flexible and understanding of the verities in Laos."

The Ambassador concluded by warning Washington that although India wished North Vietnamese and Chinese influence withdrawn from Laos, it would also demand an end to Western influence on the purely political plane.

(S) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1321, 27 Dec 60.

28 Dec CINCPAC stated to JCS his objections to the Department of State's views on the reconvening of the ICC/Laos (see item 24 December 60). CINCPAC felt that the Soviet bloc would not be deterred by unfavorable publicity from its support of the Pathet Lao, and would absorb any criticism for the sake of consolidating its gains. CINCPAC concluded, therefore, that the Department of State's proposals could not hope for success, and could only jeopardize the US investment in Laos.

CINCPAC advocated a clear statement of our commitment in Laos; this commitment should comprise a firm meeting of the Soviet challenge in Laos, akin to the US response to the Taiwan threat. Specifically, CINCPAC proposed the use of "any effective method of halting immediately" the Soviet airlift, destroying the ammunition dump at Vang Vieng, recovering or destroying the supplies delivered by the Soviet airlift, and buttressing Phoumi for a long campaign against the Pathet Lao.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 6275, 28 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

28 Dec

 CHPEO stated that the Laotian Air Force was short of pilots

and lacking in maintenance capability; additional maintenance personnel would be required. CHPEO also stated that the exact number and whereabouts of Laotian Air Force personnel were unknown to either the CHPEO or the FAL. Moreover, the French personnel who had advised the Laotian Air Force had been "asked not to return."

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 70251, 28 Dec 60.

28 Dec King Savang Vathana expressed his views on Laotian politics in an audience granted to Ambassador Brown.

The King desired to obtain maximum legality for the Boun Oum Government. To this end, he had suggested to the politicians that a special Assembly session be convened, in which the Assembly could approve the present government as provisional, and subsequently turn itself into a constituent assembly to revise the constitution and create for the Boun Oum group a constitutional basis for permanency.

The King was chagrined by the Boun Oum officials' contention that as true "revolutionaries," they had revolted against the constitution, and could not submit themselves to this constitution's assembly, a body that, under Souvanna, had so often approved measures harmful to Laos (see item 21 December 60).

The King also expressed to Ambassador Brown his opposition to the return of the ICC. The King considered that the ICC, through the Polish Representative, had in the past provided a cover for subversive Communist activities, and had encouraged the Pathet Lao. (Ambassador Brown also remarked that the King had expressed to the British Ambassador his additional feeling that the reconvening of the ICC would be a moral victory for the North Vietnamese.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1189, 28 Dec 60.

29 Dec The Department of State instructed Ambassador Brown to inform the Laotian Government of the extreme peril facing Laos, owing to the international community's grave misgivings concerning the legitimacy, responsibility, and intentions of the Boun Oum regime. Authorizing every means short of threatening US withdrawal of support, the Department of State ordered Brown to insure that:

1. Steps would be taken "to place unquestioned cloak of legality over present government";
2. Agitation for removal of the French Military Mission would cease;
3. Unqualified assurance would be given by the government that it was working for a unified Laos with no thought of partition (permanent removal of the government from Savannakhet to Vientiane would fulfill this assurance);
4. The Laotian government would produce for UN circulation a protest on USSR interference;
5. The Government would refrain from any arbitrary military changes which might endanger the



approval of aid funds from any future US Congress;

6. Gratuitous attacks upon the Geneva Accords would be avoided.

It was left to Ambassador Brown's discretion whether or not to mention to the Laotian Government the sapping effect upon the Pathet Lao which a declaration of amnesty would produce.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 698, 29 Dec 60.

30 Dec The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) forwarded to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs the memorandum of the JCS on the types of military assistance that the US should continue to provide to the Laotian Government (see item 22 December 60). In his covering letter, the Acting Assistant Secretary noted that the US had already replied to the Laotian Government's request for assistance, and action had already been initiated to satisfy most of the recommendations of the JCS. Nevertheless, he went on to say, the memorandum of the JCS was being transmitted to provide the Department of State with a record of their views. The need for the additional measures referred to by the JCS had already become apparent, and were under consideration by the Departments of State and Defense. The Acting Assistant Secretary closed by assuring the Under Secretary that Defense representatives would continue "to coordinate closely" with State representatives to ensure the timely execution and funding of emergency support requirements for Laos.

(TS) Ltr, Knight to Merchant, 30 Dec 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (20 Dec 60).

30 Dec In a letter to the US Ambassador in Cambodia Souvanna Phouma, after presenting his detailed version of recent Laotian history, endorsed Sihanouk's proposal regarding the neutralization of Cambodia and Laos. (See item 12 December 60.)  
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 772, 30 Dec 60.

30 Dec The JCS Laos Situation Report contained the outline of a new operation plan developed by the FAL for the attack on Vang Vieng, the Kong Le-Pathet Lao stronghold. The new plan would employ three coordinated drives upon that city: north from Vientiane, south from Luang Prabang, and west from the Plaine des Jarres.

The current front line units, operating north from Vientiane since 20 December (see item), would hold their positions south of Vang Vieng awaiting the arrival of the other two columns for a coordinated attack on that city.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 10/60 (30 Dec 60), 9155.2/9108 (60) R&RA.

31 Dec CINCPAC warned the JCS that, with full realization of the seriousness of the decision, he believed the US must intervene now or surrender Northern Laos to the Communists. He outlined the course of Communist military actions which were leading to a division of the country. He further warned that the attacks against Luang Prabang and Vientiane would result in the envelopment and serious decimation of the FAL, which would be fortunate to "retain the southern half



~~TOP SECRET~~ of Laos." He pointed to the Soviet airlift, the Soviet helicopter found in Thailand, and the Soviet arms captured by the FAL as proof of overt Communist aggression. These acts, he argued, justified US intervention.

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 7293, 31 Dec 60, 7305, 31 Dec 60, and DA 988045, 31 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

31 Dec The JCS informed CINCPAC of the results of a high-level meeting in Washington. The decision had been reached that "efforts to legalize the Laos Government would not be at the expense or delay of any military action." At the same time, recourse to the UN or SEATO or re-establishment of the ICC had also been rejected. CINCPAC was also informed of further decisions made at the meeting:

1. The Department of State would undertake action to get Souvanna Phouma to resign.

2. Boun Oum would be urged to "legitimatise" his government in order to attract a greater degree of international support.

3. Diplomatic representations would be made to the UK and France to enlist their support for the US position.

4. State would arrange a SEATO Council meeting in order to impress the Communist bloc with the seriousness of the Laotian situation.

5. A stiff diplomatic note to the USSR would express US concern over Soviet activities in Laos.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA OUT 988041, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec The Chief, PEO suggested to Phoumi, as an interim measure to the provision of T-6s (see item 28 December 60), the arming of FAL C-47's to harass Pathet Lao columns and possibly Russian aircraft, but Phoumi had demurred, stating that such action might in turn cause the Russians to supply weapons of greater firepower (see item 23 December 60).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 71214, 31 Dec 60; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 310338Z Dec 60.

31 Dec The US Air Attache in Saigon reported, upon the completion of a C-47 reconnaissance mission over Laos, that the C-47 was not the proper aircraft for such missions. He recommended that armed photo reconnaissance be instituted at the earliest possible moment.

The US Military Attache in Vientiane, in passing the mission report to Headquarters USAF, recommended further that a mobile combat intelligence center be established in an "adjacent country" to process the aerial photographs obtained by reconnaissance missions.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to Hq USAF, 311430Z Dec 60; (S) Msg, AIRA Saigon to CO, 13th AF, 311601Z Dec 60.

31 Dec The Department of State ordered that all SEATO nations be informed that the US was requesting an immediate extraordinary meeting of the Council of Representatives to exchange views on the gravely deteriorating Laotian situation and to consider possible courses of action. In preparation for this meeting, the Department ordered its Ambassadors to inform the SEATO governments of the US assessment of the Laotian situation and its recommendations for a solution. Primarily, the US recommended that a common effort be made to increase international acceptance of the Boun Oum Government. Steps should also be taken to support the Royal Laotian Government in its effort to regain control of Laotian territory now occupied by Communist forces and to re-establish order in the Kingdom.

The RLG was being urged, for its part, to: improve its international posture by immediately undertaking National Assembly action to legitimize the Government; make official protest to the USSR concerning the Soviet airlift; and to circulate a protest among UN members concerning Soviet intervention. The US assured SEATO members that it was making every effort to prevent Laotian appeals for SEATO or UN action without advance consultation.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, et al., 986, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec In a statement to the press a Department of State spokesman warned that the US, mindful of its obligations under the SEATO Treaty, "would take the most serious view of any intervention in Laos by the Chinese Communists or Viet Minh armed forces or others in support of the Communist Pathet Lao, who are in rebellion against the Royal Laotian Government." Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV (16 Jan 61), 76.

31 Dec The State Department announced to Ambassador Brown, as well as to US envoys to Paris, London, and

Canberra, that the Department was calling in French and British representatives to re-explore the possibility of a common front on Laos. The Department anticipated that the British and French would urge acceptance of Souvanna as Premier for any coalition government. As a counter-proposal the US would suggest Phoui as a candidate for the premiership.

(S) SecState to Vientiane, 707, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec The Acting Secretary of State informed the Indian Ambassador that after sober and careful consideration the US rejected the return of the ICC to Laos; return was at this time neither feasible nor desirable. (See items 14 and 23 December 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL, 928, 31 Dec 60;  
NYT, 31 Dec 60, 4.

1 Jan

Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia dispatched letters to the heads of state of thirteen other nations, suggesting an international conference on Laos. This proposal was a continuation of Sihanouk's campaign for a "neutral belt," (see item 29 September 60) in which neutrality would be proclaimed by Laos and Cambodia and guaranteed by the great powers (see item 12 Dec 60). The suggested participants in the conference were: the Geneva signatories - France, UK, USSR, North Vietnam, Communist China, Cambodia, and Laos; the ICC members - India, Poland and Canada; neighboring powers - Thailand, South Vietnam, and Burma; and "other interested powers" - the US.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 767, 29 Dec 60; AP, 11 Jan 61, 15 Jan 61.

1 Jan

Discussions between the French Charge d'Affaires and Under Secretary of State Merchant in Washington and the US Ambassador and French officials in Paris revealed the continued French opposition to SEATO pronouncements on Laos. Such pronouncements, the French claimed, would tender recognition to the Boun Oum Government, and France had consistently rejected any discussion of the RLG's legality in SEATO. He warned that France would oppose any communique on Laos being issued by the current Council meeting (see item 31 December 60) and hoped these US-French differences would not become too obvious before other Council members. To that end, the French minister had been instructed to "adopt a very reserved position on all matters except the exchange of information." (See item 6 January 61.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2760, 1 Jan 61; Msg, Paris to SecState, 2664, 2 Jan 61.

1 Jan

The State Department explained to the French Charge d'Affaires the US position on reconvening the ICC. The US pointed out that, unless the Indian Government accepted the legality of the Boun Oum Government, the likelihood was that the Indian representative on the ICC would vote with the Polish representative.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2760, 1 Jan 61.

2 Jan

In the same conversation, Sarit had urged that the US act immediately to equip and support two Thai regimental combat teams to be trained in unconventional warfare for use either as "volunteers" or as part of an organized SEATO force.

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 71505, 2 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1158, 2 Jan 61.

2 Jan The Laotian representative to the UN announced the invasion of Laos by an estimated 6 battalions of North Vietnamese troops.

(U) Msg, NY to SecState, 1877, 4 Jan 61; NYT, 3 Jan 61, 1, AP, 3 Jan 61.

2 Jan The Laotian representative in London delivered to the Soviet Embassy a note vigorously protesting "open Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Laos." The text of the note was also presented to the Secretary General of the United Nations, with a request that it be circulated among all UN members.

The Soviet Embassy in London copied the substance of the note but refused to "accept" it, since the USSR did not recognize the Boun Oum regime.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1224, 1 Jan 61; (U) Msg, London to SecState, 2734, 4 Jan 61; (U) Msg, New York to SecState, 1871, 1 Jan 61.

3 Jan According to the JCS Laos Situation Report FAL forces from Luang Prabang were reported to be headed south toward RJ 7-13 and Vang Vieng (see items 30 December 60 and 14 January 61). (The thrust from the Plaine des Jarres which the 30 December plan had envisioned did not materialize because of a Pathet Lao offensive in that area-- see item 7 Jan 61.)

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 2/61 - 4/61 (3 - 5 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

3 Jan The JCS requested CINCPAC's appraisal of the forces, either SEATO or US unilaterally, necessary "to clear out Laos and restore acceptable degree of order to the country" in 30 to 45 days. For purposes of planning CINCPAC was ordered to assume no overt DRV or Chinese intervention beyond the present supply support and volunteer forces and to accept, as the primary objective, control of all key communication and population centers and the reduction of Kong Le/PL forces into disorganized bands.

In his answer on 6 January, CINCPAC outlined a plan calling for a 24,000 man force including three battle groups and three marine battalions with air and naval support to gain and maintain control of key areas and "to reestablish the situation approximating that extant prior to Kong Le Coup, with the Boun Oum government in control except for [the] northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua." CINCPAC believed it "extremely doubtful," however, that the Kong Le/PL force could be reduced to guerrilla bands within the 45 day limit. This was a task for Lao themselves, CINCPAC charged, "but with our help of course."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 988094, 3 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8744, 6 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

- 3 Jan A Soviet representative informed Ambassador Thompson that the USSR would be "favorably disposed" to the reconvening of the ICC only if Souvanna agreed.  
(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1538, 4 Jan 61.
- 3 Jan The views of King Savang were set forth in interviews with a UN representative and a French diplomat. The King was hostile to Kong Le, but conciliatory towards Souvanna. The King had been encouraging the Boun Oum regime to present itself to the National Assembly for investiture, and would encourage this government's consideration of any new control commission which might be established by a reconvened Geneva Conference; the King was utterly opposed, however, to the reactivation of the ICC, since such reactivation represented to him capitulation to the Chinese Communists and North Vietnamese.  
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2669, 3 Jan 61; (U) Msg, New York to SecState, 1878, 4 Jan 61.
- 4 Jan The US Military Attache in Vientiane reported that Soviet aircraft were known to have delivered 55 planeloads of materiel to the Kong Le forces in Vientiane between 5 and 15 December. Thirty planes were observed between 5 and 8 December delivering POL; 25 additional flights between 11 and 13 December had brought several howitzers and mortars as well as crates believed to contain ammunition. The Soviet airlift to Vientiane had ceased on 13 December, the attache reported. Commencing on 20 December, however, air drops to the Kong Le forces moving north from Vientiane had been observed. These air drops continued in the Vang Vieng area through the end of the month. The final day of December saw the initiation of Soviet air drops in Xieng Khouang province.  
(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 71864, 4 Jan 61.
- 4 Jan Ambassador Whitney received from the British Foreign Office confirmation that the British had received a note from Boun Oum stating that the Laotian Government would consider accepting the ICC if all of the Geneva signatories agreed, and if the request came to the Laotian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Geneva co-chairmen (UK and USSR).  
  
The British reply to the Laotian note stipulated that the British envisioned that any request to the Laotians would be made by the ICC chairman, India, rather than by the co-chairmen.  
(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2729, 4 Jan 61.
- 5 Jan Ambassador Brown reported that the Laotian National Assembly, in extraordinary session, had withdrawn its confidence from Souvanna Phouma, alleging that his government had dissolved itself as of 9 December 1960. In the same motion, the Assembly confirmed its investiture of the Boun Oum Government as of 4 January 1961.  
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1296, 9 Jan 61.
- 5 Jan The French Ambassador in Washington urged upon the State Department the necessity of a tripartite collaboration in which the US, UK, and France might achieve a common approach to the USSR on the question of Laos. This approach would state that the three

Western powers "believe in" non-intervention in Laos and indicate that the cessation of Soviet arms shipments into Laos must ensue if the Soviets want "general detente." Assuming Soviet agreement to non-intervention, approaches to the neighbors of Laos would then be made in order that they too would stop furnishing arms. "Thereafter, various Lao elements, not including Pathet Lao, should be able to form government corresponding to their character and a neutral, peaceful Laos emerge."

The State Department posed as a serious drawback to such a tripartite approach the destructive effect this approach would produce upon the confidence which the US, UK, and France had nurtured so carefully in the smaller Asian allies.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2804, 5 Jan 61.

5 Jan CINCPAC requested the US military representatives in Thailand and Vietnam to provide their best estimates of the number of combat-worthy F8F aircraft available in their respective areas. CHMAAG Vietnam replied that Vietnam possessed two F8F aircraft immediately flyable and seven aircraft requiring varying degrees of maintenance to attain combat readiness. CHJUSMAG Thailand estimated that the RTAF possessed 20 combat-worthy aircraft of this type.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand and CHMAAG Vietnam, 050132Z Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Vietnam to CINCPAC, 050927Z Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 72316, 5 Jan 61.

6 Jan After its third session in a week the special meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives adjourned without issuing a statement. The Council had been convened at the request of the US to discuss the Laotian crisis. (See items 31 December 60 and 1 January 61.)  
AP, 6 Jan 61.

6 Jan The USSR advised the Western Powers that it would not agree to any formula for ending the civil war in Laos that was based on recognition of the Boun Oum Government.  
AP, 6 Jan 61.

6 Jan

CINCPAC heartily endorsed this plan and recommended that the JCS support it and "others which may follow, through which Meo may be used to better advantage than has been [the] case heretofore." Long-standing jealousies and suspicions between the Meo and Lao people, cautioned CINCPAC, made unlikely Phoumi's consent to any large scale supply of Meo forces.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 060117Z Jan 61.

7 Jan The State Department learned from the British Embassy in Washington that the Indian Ambassador to Moscow had been instructed to approach the Soviet government with a new proposal for reactivation of the ICC in Laos.

The Indian position was that India was willing to serve on any reconvened ICC, provided that:

1. the request for reactivation came from the Geneva co-chairmen;
2. the reactivated Commission would approach the King, rather than the Laotian government;
3. the Boun Oum regime could not impose any restrictions upon the ICC;
4. the Canadian and Polish governments would agree to assume their share of the responsibility.

The British were distressed that the Indians had gone directly to the USSR without prior coordination with UK; by this action the British were forced to support the Indian demarche in order to maintain a conciliatory posture. The British requested that the US also support the Indian approach.

The State Department objected to the Indian proposals on two counts, the first as being impracticable, the second as being undesirable:

1. "The King would not . . . agree to the Commission making initial contact with him." Because the Laotian King was a constitutional monarch only, both the US and the King would consider it improper that governmental proposals be presented to the King.

2. The proposals would deny the Boun Oum regime its sovereign right to impose conditions upon the readmission of the ICC to Laos. This suggested to the US the "intent . . . not to recognize the government or else to equate it with rebels, the former PL."

(C) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL, 976, 8 Jan 61.

7 Jan Ambassador Brown suggested to the State Department the creation of a neutral mediation group, comprising true Asian neutrals. Ambassador Brown reported that the Laotian Government would accept such a commission, as would the neutrals. He argued that if the West could accept the Commission the Bloc countries would be forced either to accept or to disappoint the neutral Asian nations.

As a means of initiating such an action, Ambassador Brown suggested having the Laotian Government ask one of the neutrals to act as Chairman and seek the agreement of other neutrals; terms of reference could be worked out between the Laotian Government and the Chairman of the Commission.

Commenting upon Ambassador Brown's proposal, the US Ambassador to Thailand cautioned that the US enjoyed little sympathy among Asian neutrals. But the US Ambassador to Cambodia advised that, if such a neutral commission included Cambodia, Sihanouk would be mollified even though his 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61) was being discarded.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1285, 7 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1213, 9 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 825, 10 Jan 61.



7 Jan

The Secretary of State informed Ambassadors Brown and Johnson of decisions reached at a State-Defense meeting. Among other items the Secretary noted:

1) The US would authorize: a) the use of US aircraft for logistical support of the RLG if required and if CAT aircraft proved inadequate; b)

and c) the use of up to 10 T-6 aircraft, armed with guns and rockets only, by the Laotian air force for interdicting the Soviet airlift (see items 7 and 19 January 61).

2) The US would issue a warning to the USSR on the continuance of its airlift support of the Pathet Lao, but only after the principle allies of the US had been informed.

3) The US would request the RLG to issue a note warning the USSR against continued violation of Laotian air space and a note requesting any US assistance in air actions as might be subsequently agreed upon by the two governments (see item 11 January 61).

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 733, 7 Jan 61.

7 Jan

CINCPAC informed the JCS that, in his view, reinstatement of the ICC in Laos would serve very well the policies of the Communist Bloc, the neutrals, and others, but certainly not the national interests of the US. The ICC, he believed, would equate legally introduced US aid to the FAL with Bloc aid to the PL, and while US aid would thereby be seriously hampered, clandestine resupply of the PL would continue. Moreover, if direct intervention by SEATO or the US unilaterally was infeasible at this time, the only way Laos could be saved was by a substantial increase in US support. Covert operations by the US or Thailand in the presence of the ICC would be "uncomfortably vulnerable" to exposure. Most important, CINCPAC believed, the ICC would tend to foreclose the threat of SEATO intervention, thus removing Bloc fears of Western opposition in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 9334, 7 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

7 Jan

By this date, after a week of heavy fighting, the bulk of the FAL forces in the Plaine des Jarres area had, according to the JCS Laos Situation Reports, withdrawn by stages to a position approximately 40 miles southeast of Xieng Khouang city. This withdrawal left the Pathet Lao in effective control of the vital central plain of Laos.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 1/61 - 6/61 (2 Jan-7 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

7 Jan

As a result of a State-Defense meeting presided over by the Secretary of State, the JCS ordered all current restrictions on the use of T-6 aircraft in Laos lifted with one stipulation: no bombs could be employed against any Laotian target.

On the same day restrictions against CINCPAC's use of US military aircraft for moving supplies into Laos were also lifted. The JCS authorized this action, however, with the understanding that all CAT aircraft would be operating at full capacity before any US aircraft would be used.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~SECRET~~

Answering the same day, CINCPAC urged that the restrictions against bombing in Laos be lifted. He suggested that the Ambassador in Laos leave the choice of weapons up to the military and argued that there was no more provocation to killing Communists with bombs than with bullets. He also claimed that bombing Communist supply airfields would not necessarily result in Bloc retaliation.

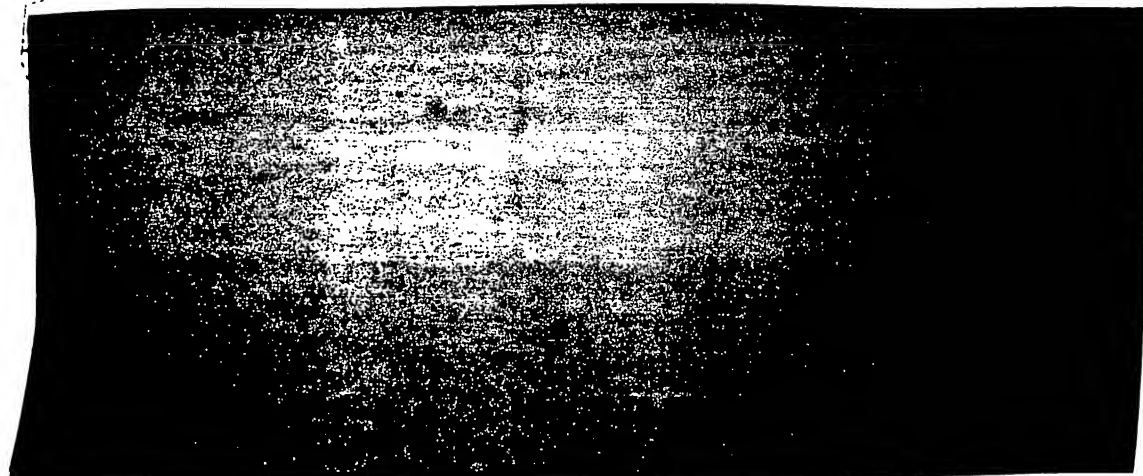
CINCPAC scorned the claim that forceful US action in Laos would result in another Korea or World War III. He viewed the Laotian problem as simply a guerrilla insurrection kept alive by outside support. He predicted that the Lao "can fight and will fight if we stand up alongside of them."

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 988337 and 988339, 7 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 9317, 7 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

7 Jan CINCPAC outlined to the commander of Joint Task Force 116 the mission contemplated for that task force in the event of unilateral US intervention in Laos. The mission, according to CINCPAC, was to "deploy rapidly to Laos and make an airborne assault and airlanded operation" to (1) seize key areas on the Plaine des Jarres to permit establishment of a base for supporting further FAL operations in northern Laos; (2) seize or secure Luang Prabang as necessary and defend that area in conjunction with FAL forces; and (3) conduct other assault operations as necessary to permit the linking up of friendly forces in the Vientiane-Luang Prabang-Plaine des Jarres complex.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, DA IN 72908, 7 Jan 61.

7 Jan



On the same day, CINCPAC requested the Intelligence MTT suggested by the JCS on 23 December 1960 (see item). Regarding the qualifications of the team members, CINCPAC endorsed the recommendations of CHPEO: (1) maturity and motivation were more important than combat intelligence experience, rank, or MOS; (2) fluent French or Thai was prerequisite to the successful functioning of each individual; (3) the team should arrive in Laos as soon as possible, for a tour of 180 days; and (4) the team should be deployed in pairs to the Laotian military regions. CHPEO had emphasized that this short range program could not be a substitute for a long range program of training the FAL in all aspects of military intelligence; CINCPAC concurred in this view.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 070440Z Jan 61; (S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 72525, 6 Jan 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 73220, 8 Jan 61.

9 Jan

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1214, 9 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 74111, 11 Jan 61.

9 Jan

The British replied to US objections to the Indian Government's 7 January demarche to Moscow (see item). The British argued that the ICC's contact with the King would be a "dodge," designed to overcome Communist objections to dealing with Boun Oum. The British anticipated that once the ICC had been formally introduced into Laos, the King could then refer it to the Boun Oum Government who could then establish terms of reference for the Commission's operation within Laos. The British argued that any attempt to frame terms of reference prior to ICC entry into Laos would surely break down.

On 11 January Ambassador Houghton reported the French reaction to the Indian proposal. The French would acquiesce in the Indian proposal but would play no active role in its implementation.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2775, 9 Jan 61; (C) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 2748, 9 Jan 61, 2778, 11 Jan 61.

9 Jan

CINCPAC warned the JCS that if, as recent messages indicated, the US was moving toward an international political solution of the Laotian problem, it must choose one which would not "hand the Communists military advantages while inhibiting our ability to react militarily should the political solution fail." He particularly scored suggestions of a Laotian appeal to the UN, a reconconvocation of the Geneva Conference, or a reactivation of the ICC, as inimical to US military plans--which, in the absence of direct SEATO or US intervention, were dependent on massive resupply of the RLG. He admitted, however, that from the viewpoint of the US a neutral mediation group, other than the ICC, might have more to offer.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 0121, 9 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

10 Jan

The JCS Laos Situation Report stated that, having secured the crossroads of Routes 7 and 13 on the Vientiane-Luang Prabang road on 9 January, the FAL initiated an offensive eastward from the junction toward the Plaine des Jarres in order to capture that region in conjunction with the FAL forces attacking from positions southeast of Xieng Khouang (see item 7 January 61).

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 7/61 and 8/61 (9 Jan and 10 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

10-11  
Jan

[REDACTED]

to supply carbines, grenades, anti-personnel mines, and other "sabotage items," required for the "imminent" support of irregulars in unconventional warfare in the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres area.

On the following day [REDACTED] concerted and repeated efforts [REDACTED] had failed to persuade Phoumi to authorize direct support to these Meo forces. Phoumi's adamant position was that the Meos were untrustworthy and primitive; the Meo leaders had hoodwinked the US authorities; and in any event all support must be through the FAL which was already providing adequately for the Meo needs. [REDACTED] The decision to seek Phoumi's approval had been taken because of the US conviction that large scale aid to the Meo could not be concealed from the FAL. [REDACTED]

11 Jan Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State progress made towards the achievement of the US's multiple demands upon the Laotian government (see item 29 December 60).

The Boun Oum government had been legalized since 5 January (see item); the dangers of partition and of arbitrary military changes had diminished; the Laotian government had formally protested Soviet interference (see item 2 January 61); and the RLG had issued no attacks upon the Geneva accord.

However, Phoumi had remained adamant in his anti-French posture. He was still intent upon removing the French, and to this end had dismissed French advisors, ignored French diplomatic representations, and requested the return of Seno air base to Laotian control.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1317, 11 Jan 61.

11 Jan Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that the Boun Oum government had issued a circular note warning the USSR on the airlift supply of the Pathet Lao rebels. The RLG also called upon the US to provide assistance in air reconnaissance and other "counter actions as both governments may subsequently agree on." (These notes were prompted by the State-Defense decision of 7 January - see item.)

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1316, 11 Jan 61.

11 Jan In interviews on 9 January and 11 January with a British diplomat and an American correspondent, respectively, Souvanna set forth once again his views upon Laotian affairs. Souvanna continued to maintain that the Boun Oum government was illegal. Deprived of his constitutional argument (see item 5 January 61), Souvanna now alleged that illegality still existed because of Boun Oum's dependence upon US support. Souvanna still would not consider resigning until the Laotian government contained "all elements." He supported the return of the ICC, as a stop gap measure, and defended Soviet aid because it had been requested by Quinim, whom Souvanna now claimed to have appointed. (See item 12 December 60.)

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 814, 9 Jan 61;  
(U) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1144, 17 Jan 61.

11 Jan The President of the French Republic received a note from the Soviet Premier accusing the US of violating the Geneva agreement, while noting favorably French support of a coalition Laotian Government. The Premier expressed Soviet support for the proposal of Sihanouk for a conference of all interested parties, and queried the French President upon his attitude towards such a conference.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2907, 13 Jan 61.

11 Jan In a memorandum to the JCS the Chairman, JCS, stated that as a result of briefings on Laos given to Mr. McNamara and Mr. Rusk, there existed the possibility that the JCS might soon be requested to provide comprehensive recommendations designed "to bring conditions in Laos to a satisfactory level." In anticipation of such a request, the Chairman recommended that the JCS take, as a matter of urgency, the following actions:

1) That CINCPAC be directed to review all current actions to improve the effectiveness of operations in Laos and to make any further recommendations for additional actions that could contribute to the early achievement of a satisfactory situation in Laos. CINCPAC was to assume that the US would provide "all necessary funds, resources, and energetic support" to implement his recommendations; further, CINCPAC was to consolidate current and additional recommended actions and submit them to the JCS by 18 January 1961 (see item 18 January 61).

2) That the Joint Staff, JCS, re-examine the situation in Laos and provide recommendations on political-military actions in support of the recommendations which would be forthcoming from CINCPAC.

(The JCS approved the recommendations of the Chairman on 13 January 61; on the same day CINCPAC was directed to take the action recommended by the Chairman.)

(TS) JCS 1992/897, 12 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105 (11 Jan 61).

11 Jan According to the cable from the US Military Attache in Vientiane, the first T-6 sorties of the fledgling Laotian combat air force resulted in "jammed guns, unspent rockets, and aborts."

The attache also reported that he had been approached at Saigon by the commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, with an offer to fly AD-6 strike missions in Laos. These flights already had been planned by the Vietnamese Air Force, and would be carried out by volunteer pilots, provided that President Diem approved. The Vietnamese commander also had urged the attache to contact the US Ambassador in order to have the ambassador secure this approval.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to Hq USAF, DA IN 74195, 11 Jan 61; (S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 74501, 12 Jan 61.

- 12 Jan CINCPAC instructed CINCPACFLT and CINCPACAF to provide one experienced fighter-bomber pilot each for temporary duty with the PEO Laos. These pilots were to function as advisers to the Laotian Air Force on T-6 tactics.  
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and PACAF, DA IN 74609, 13 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 76176, 18 Jan 61.
- 12 Jan The Canadian views on the reactivation of the ICC were made known to Ambassador Whitney by the British government. The Canadians agreed to participate within the following frame of reference:
1. The ICC representatives would try to ascertain the facts of the current Laotian situation;
  2. The representatives would work for a "cease fire";
  3. The representatives would report their findings to the Geneva co-chairmen and the ICC governments, and would recommend for or against continued ICC participation in Laotian affairs.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2828, 12 Jan 61.
- 12 Jan Ambassador Brown warned the State Department that any policy which envisioned Souvanna's participation in the Boun Oum Government would be regarded by the Laotian Government as "tantamount to betrayal," inasmuch as the Boun Oum regime had come to regard Souvanna as the epitome of all that they were struggling against.  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1327, 12 Jan 61.
- 12-13 Jan CHPEO, responding to CINCPAC's warning of the "urgent necessity to create a respectable capability" for the Laotian Air Force, "agreed to accept" six additional T-6's thus raising the number of Laotian T-6's to a projected total of 10. CHPEO reported, however, that Phoumi had on hand only 10 first line pilots; since four of these were already integrated into the T-6 program, there were only six pilots available to fly the FAL's eight C-47's. On 13 January CINCPAC replied to CHPEO that in view of the critical shortage of pilots reported by CHPEO, CINCPAC was considering recommending the immediate establishment of an accelerated pilot training program in Thailand for FAL trainees. This program envisaged two to three weeks of ground training, followed by 30-40 hours flight training in light aircraft and 20-30 hours transition to T-6's.
- [REDACTED]
- (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 74021, 11 Jan 61 and DA IN 74742, 13 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC DA IN 74448, 12 Jan 61
- 13 Jan CINCPAC authorized the Chief, PEO, to attach PEO personnel to FAL units in order to: a) advise and support FAL commanders in operational and logistical matters down to the battalion level; b) assist in the establishment and operation of aerial resupply of FAL forces down to the battalion level; and c) establish unilateral US communications down to the FAL battalion level with the US Communications Control, Vientiane. At the same time, PEO personnel were forbidden to operate forward of FAL battalions in disputed areas or behind insurgent lines for any purposes.  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO, DA IN 74694, 13 Jan 61.



13 Jan Ambassador Johnson warned the Secretary of State that SEATO morale was at a low ebb, and that the organization might be fatally discredited unless some early action was taken to persuade the Asian members that SEATO could play a useful role in the Laotian crisis. The Ambassador submitted a draft SEATO communique that 1) pledged SEATO cooperation in seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis, 2) recognized Communist interference in support of the rebel forces, and 3) noted that some SEATO members had been asked for assistance by the RLG. He urged the Department to attempt to secure UK and French cooperation in issuing this "minimum action" which might restore some faith in SEATO. He also summed up other advantages accruing from such a statement: it would put the Communists on notice of SEATO intentions and would strengthen Boun Oum's Government in future international discussions.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1240, 13 Jan 61.

14 Jan Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Secretary of State the text of a Laotian note to the French. This note requested that the French completely replace the personnel of the FMM, in order to "recover the former happy harmony" of Franco-Lao relations.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1340, 14 Jan 61.

14 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS, using the arguments and language of CINCPAC (see item 16 December 60), urged that the Secretary recommend to the Secretary of State as an urgent matter:

(a) the removal of political restrictions on U.S. military assistance to Laos;

(b) that the United States assume direct responsibility for the FAL training program; and

(c) the early establishment of a legitimate MAAG in Laos.

In their memorandum the JCS also called to the Secretary's attention the fact that they had long been on record in favor of the establishment in Laos of a regular MAAG staffed with uniformed personnel.

(S) JCSM-6-61, derived from JCS 1992/890, 14 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/4060 (16 Dec 60).

14 Jan In a long memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS set forth their conclusions and recommended certain US courses of action in Laos. Gravely concerned by the deteriorating situation in Laos, the JCS had concluded that the US "must take immediate and decisive actions to defeat the aggressors in Laos or face the possibility of a neutral or Communist dominated South-east Asia." Should Laos fall to the aggressors, the Communists would be in a position to dominate Cambodia and outflank the defenses of both Thailand and Vietnam.

Fortunately, the recent formation of the Boun Oum/Phoumi provisional government had provided the US with its best opportunity to act since the Kong Le coup of August 1960. It was the view of the JCS that expanded US support, both overt and covert, of the provisional

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government would probably make it possible for the Boun Oum/Phoumi leadership to secure the minimum objectives of continuing to stay in power and of maintaining control of the principal population and communication centers.

From the military point of view the only solution to the problem of insurgency in Laos, said the JCS, was to equip and train Lao forces capable of maintaining internal security without the intervention of non-Laotian military forces.

The JCS recommended that the Secretary of Defense seek US governmental approval of the following goals: "As a minimum goal the United States should take any action necessary to enable the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government to maintain control of the principal population and communications centers in Laos. The ultimate goal of the United States should be the development of a viable government, friendly to the United States, and in complete control of Laos."

The JCS also recommended that the Secretary seek US governmental approval for the implementation of the following "immediate and positive" steps:

- (1) Establish a legitimate MAAG in Laos to boost the morale of the FAL and to clearly indicate U.S. intent to fully support the legal government. Equipment should be furnished with respect to requirements and the MAAG should be manned in sufficient strength to assure full and proper utilization of this equipment.

- (2) Take over direct responsibility for the FAL training program after an open MAAG is in operation.

The JCS also recommended, finally, that the Secretary seek approval for the following course of action:

The United States Government should continue to make every effort to obtain agreement within SEATO for the recognition and support of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government. Further, the United States Government, at the appropriate time under the Terms of Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, should take action to obtain agreement within SEATO for the introduction of a SEATO force into Laos and the implementation of MPO Plan 5/60, should indications develop that the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government cannot cope with the Communist threat. However, it must be recognized that there is considerable doubt that the Western members of SEATO will agree to such action, and thus SEATO action cannot be depended upon. In the event unanimous SEATO agreement cannot be reached, and action cannot be taken by SEATO as such, the United States should press for agreement by as



many of those nations as possible to intervene in accordance with the principles of SEATO.

Among other things, the JCS stated in their memorandum that:

1) The US should not for the time being take the initiative to bring about UN intervention or the reestablishment of the ICC in Laos.

2) US unilateral intervention should be initiated only after reasonable efforts to secure SEATO or multilateral support had failed, and when circumstances required such intervention to attain minimum US objectives.

3) Should unilateral US or SEATO intervention take place, the US should take "appropriate increased readiness measures" concurrent with the intervention in order to indicate the determination of the US "to insure an anti-Communist Laos."

The JCS attached to their memorandum a ten page "Evaluation of Major Courses of Action" in Laos. (See item 19 January 61.) (On 6 February the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman, JCS that the proposal of the JCS for establishing a MAAG in Laos had been considered by State and Defense and it had been decided to hold the proposal "in abeyance.") (TS) JCSM-13-61, derived from JCS 1992/894, 14 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105 (30 Dec 60).

14 Jan CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the Vietnamese offer of AD-6 strikes in Laos be accepted (see item 11 January 61). In making his recommendation, CINCPAC pointed out that 1) T-6s were "probably" not adequate to achieve the "number one" objective of halting the Soviet airlift; 2) [REDACTED] and 3) Phoumi had requested Vietnam to make available to him a light tactical air squadron with Lao insignia. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142055Z Jan 61.

14 Jan CHJUSMAG Thailand furnished to CINCPAC an interim reply to CINCPAC's query regarding pilot training for Laotians (see item 12 January 61). [REDACTED]

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 75333, 14 Jan 61

14 Jan Phoumi reversed his decision of 11 January (see item 10-11 January 61) and agreed to the direct supply of Meo irregulars by the US. (On 17 January, [REDACTED] rice and ammunition had been airdropped to the Meo forces.) [REDACTED]

14 Jan Supporting the Indian initiative of 7 January 1961 (see item), the British began coordinating with the State Department the composition of a note to the USSR. The note would be designed to secure Soviet cooperation

in a request to the Indian Government for the reconvening of the ICC in Laos. (See item 21 January 61.)

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1020, 14 Jan 61.

14 Jan

The Secretary of State informed US diplomats of "the general concept upon which we have been proceeding" in Laos. The Secretary reiterated that the overriding US objective remained the independence and territorial integrity of Laos. To achieve this objective, however, the Secretary delineated three planes of action-- Laotian domestic politics, military and international-- as follows:

1) Domestic politics in Laos. On this plane the US objectives had been the legitimation of Boun Oum Government and bringing it to a realization of the international consequences of its actions - and thus the importance of dealing prudently with its own problems, with other countries (including France), and with the international press. The US had also counseled the RLG to accept a position of "non-alignment" and an ultimate broadening of its political base. Non-alignment meant an independent Laos able to maintain its territorial integrity and immune from charges that it was being used as an "advanced base" by either East or West. The basic purpose of this action was to break the legal cover for Bloc intervention, to strengthen the RLG's international position, and to create a more favorable climate for necessary US actions. The US had only been partially successful in this area.

2) Military. The US had sought to meet the RLG request for MAP assistance and "to maximize the effectiveness of Phoumi's forces," but had exercised restraint in the hope that the present level of support would be sufficient to enable the FAL to contain the military threat and eventually reduce it to a low-scale guerrilla insurgency. Another basic objective was to eliminate Bloc support to the rebels. Above all, the US was attempting to limit outside support to avoid an "escalation process" whereby the local war might get out of control. The US hoped to convince the Bloc that it was firm in its defense of Laos, but not at the cost of gaining an international reputation for recklessness.

3) International. The US was attempting to provide a framework for a multilateral approach which would result in the termination of hostilities and continued support of the RLG by Western and Asian countries. In dealing with various proposals advanced for international investigation and negotiation of the crisis, however, the US must be careful to avoid any international scheme whose terms of reference would naively equate the RLG and the Pathet Lao, or seek to solve the situation by terminating Western assistance to the RLG. Currently, while avoiding outright rejection of the ICC, the US expected the British-Indian plan to collapse, hopefully with the onus on the USSR. The US was also considering possible graduated action in SEATO or with certain SEATO members in order to give new life to SEATO.

The US expected no early resolution of the Lao crisis, the Secretary warned, and it did not exclude consideration of any of the various international courses of action which had been or might be proposed.

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1018, 14 Jan 61.

- 14 Jan Reacting to reports from Taipei that President Chiang had dispatched an envoy to Vientiane to coordinate the activities of Nationalist irregulars in Burma with Phoumi forces, the Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Brown to inform the Laotian Government that the US was strongly opposed to any Nationalist military activities in Laos.  
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 764, 14 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan Neither the British nor the Indian reply to Sihanouk's 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61) expressed any objection to the plan, but both governments favored the reactivation of the ICC as a quicker and simpler program. (On 26 January 61, the US Embassy in Paris learned that the Canadian reply would parallel the British and Indian notes.)  
(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2889, 20 Jan 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3017, 30 Jan 61; AP, 16 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 858, 15 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan The US Embassy at New Delhi learned that Nehru in recent days had termed it "nonsense to speak of [Souvanna] Phouma Government, no one can find it."  
(S) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1454, 16 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan The President of the French Republic today replied to the recent note from the Soviet Premier (see item 11 January 61). While agreeing that there could be numerous criticisms of the present situation, the French President did not support the Premier's castigations of the US; but he did suggest the Pathet Lao refusal to be peacefully integrated into Laotian politics counterpoised any foment stirred by western powers. The President stated that the French were primarily interested in the reactivation of the ICC as a short-term measure for the cessation of hostilities; the President did not commit himself to the Sihanouk proposal beyond stating that it merited "serious study."  
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2885, 20 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2901, 21 Jan 61.
- 17 Jan In a memorandum to the JCS the CNO requested that the JCS approve and forward to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum recommending that the Secretary "obtain, in coordination with the Secretary of State, high level approval" for the acceptance and implementation of the Vietnamese offer of AD-6 aircraft for operations in Laos (see item 11 January 61). The CNO felt that this step was necessary because the Soviet logistical airlift into Laos continued to buildup the Pathet Lao capability to repulse forces of the Royal Lao Government, and the AT-6's recently introduced in Laos possessed only a limited capability of inhibiting Soviet airlift operations. (By N/H of JCS 1992/898, 26 January 61, the CNO Memorandum was withdrawn.)  
(TS) JCS 1992/898, 17 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105 (14 Jan 61).

17 Jan CINCPAC requested CHPEO to effect a plan for the skilled intelligence debriefing of CAT crews operating in Laos. CINCPAC observed that these crews were valuable sources of operational intelligence and suggested that qualified debriefers be stationed at Pakse, Vientiane, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang (see item 27 January 61).  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 172342Z Jan 61.

18 Jan The US after "earnest consideration," rejected Cambodia's 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61). Noting that serious doubts were entertained by several of the nations concerned, the US stated its preference for a political solution in Laos, and emphasized that this reply did not foreclose US approval of international conference generally.

During the past week, the four Bloc members included in Sihanouk's 14-nation conference--USSR, North Vietnam, Communist China, and Poland--had given their assent to the proposal.

(C) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1070, 20 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 383, 13 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 881, 19 Jan 61; AP, 11, 12, 15, and 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan At the request of the JCS, CINCPAC outlined at great length the amount and composition of US military assistance to Laos since the establishment of the Boun Oum Government. The US was currently supporting a Laotian force of 58,800, including 29,000 FAL regulars. At the same time, although some relaxation of alert status had occurred, major units of CINCPAC's forces were ready to execute CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59.

In conclusion, CINCPAC urged certain courses of action in order to bring about "a early, dramatic, sizeable reversal of the present trend." These courses of action included: 1) augmentation of Laotian air support capability by increasing the RLG airforce, freeing B-26's--now on stand-by--for operations in Laos, and converting three infantry battalions to parachute battalions; 2) institution of a large-scale bounty system to encourage the capture of non-Laotian enemy and destruction of heavy PL equipment; 3) provision of a regularly constituted MAAG for Laos operating down to the company level; and 4) securing some overt expression of serious SEATO concern over Laos.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA IN 76176, 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan CHPEO advised CINCPAC that the T-6's were proving ineffective against the Soviet aircraft because of their lack of speed. To CHPEO it appeared that the priority targets for the T-6's should be troops, gun positions, supply dumps, and similar fixed targets. To make the aircraft effective against such targets, CHPEO recommended that the restrictions on the use of bombs be lifted (see item 7 January 61).

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 76274, 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan CINCPAC requested the JCS to issue a directive authorizing the use of bombs and napalm in Laos. He also urged that the Chief, PEO, be given a free hand to plan

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strikes and determine the priority of targets. (See item 29 January 61.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 3490, 18 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

18 Jan CINCPAC cabled CHPEO that the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres should have priority over other military efforts in Laos, and suggested a plan to achieve this purpose. The plan called for the FAL to launch, at the earliest possible time, an airborne attack by at least one battalion, combined with simultaneous ground attacks and timely airlanded reinforcements. According to CINCPAC, this plan should consider the maximum use of friendly Meo tribesmen and should assume that ample airlift (16 C-46 or equivalent aircraft) would be available.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 182251Z Jan 61.

18 Jan The JCS requested CINCPAC's views as to the feasibility and desirability of a proposal to train FAL forces in Thailand under US supervision. This proposal was offered, said the JCS, because of the seriousness of the Pathet Lao threat and the need to avoid the time-consuming Franco-American training procedures in Laos made necessary by the Geneva Accords.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 983936, 18 Jan 61.

18-19 Jan CHPEO, commenting upon the proposed FAL pilot training program (see item 12 January 61), reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had been receptive to the idea [REDACTED] Phoumi's plan, according to CHPEO, was to select the 20 most eligible persons, with final screening to produce 12 trainees.

[REDACTED]

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 76378, 18 Jan 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JUSMAG Thailand, 192211Z Jan 61.

19 Jan

[REDACTED]

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1271, 19 January 61).

19 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense Gates stated that despite the impending change in Administration, he believed the "rapidly deteriorating

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situation" in Laos would admit of no delay. He posited that the US must either undertake increased military measures in Laos or face the possibility of a Communist dominated Southeast Asia. As an immediate objective in the furtherance of the long range US goal of independence and territorial integrity for Laos, he submitted that the increase of the size, scope, and authority of the PEO had to be achieved in order to enable the Houn Oum/Phoumi Government to regain undisputed control of the principal population and communication centers in Laos.

The Secretary of Defense submitted this proposal as an interim measure and urged the creation of a MAAG "as soon as politically feasible." To supplement this interim measure, he suggested that the US: 1) continue its effort to secure the widest possible recognition and support of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government; and 2) seek agreement within SEATO for the introduction of a SEATO force into Laos should it appear that the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government could not cope with the Communist threat. If this SEATO action could not be obtained, the Secretary suggested that the US seek a similar agreement with as many SEATO countries as possible for multilateral intervention. If the pace of events precluded either political action, the Secretary of Defense foresaw that unilateral intervention by the US might be a "necessary prerequisite to obtaining the desired multilateral response." (See item 14 January 61.)

(The Secretary of Defense furnished a copy of this letter to Mr. McNamara and recommended that the Secretary of State provide this information to Mr. Rusk.)

(TS) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/894, 27 Jan 61, JMF Laos.

19 Jan The US Ambassador in Moscow cabled the Department of State information that a Soviet official had admitted that the USSR, in formulating Laotian policy, was obliged to deal with the West on one hand, and the Chinese on the other. The report of this Chinese pressure upon the Soviets was given further substance by a report from London on the following day that expressed the British belief that, unless prospects for an international conference brightened, the Soviets would have to accede to this Chinese pressure.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1659, 18 Jan 61; (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2918, 19 Jan 61.

19 Jan In a series of messages, Ambassador Houghton described the French reaction to Phoumi's renewed agitation for the replacement of French military personnel (see item 14 January 61).

While the French were not unwilling to negotiate differences with Laos, they resented being forced to do so. Any withdrawal which the French would be obliged to undertake would be interpreted by the French as a violation of the Geneva agreement, rather than of the bilateral Franco-Laos military agreement of 1953. Such an attitude by the French would pose grave legal problems for the continued presence of American military advisors in Laos, since these advisors were permitted in Laos

only under the "umbrella" of the FMM (see introduction and item 16 December 60). Moreover, if Phoumi forced such a situation, the French would construe the move to have the sufferance of the US. The French course of action for the present was to procrastinate, in the belief that Phoumi could not force the French out and that France's allies would prevent Phoumi from presenting any ultimata.

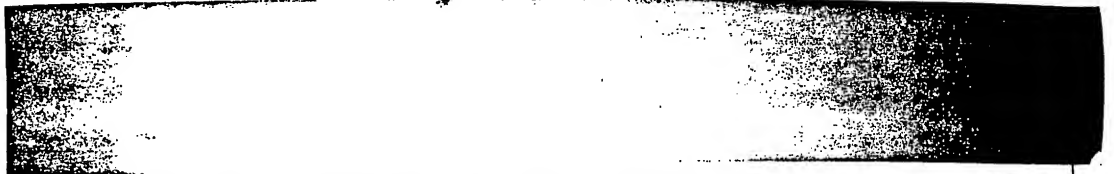
On the same day Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State the views expressed by Phoumi on the same subject in interviews of 18 January and 19 January. Phoumi did not wish to sever relations with the French, but he did intend to "make his mark," to impress upon the French his feeling that many Frenchmen in the country were imbued with anti-Phoumi attitudes. Phoumi did not intend to push the French too closely, although he did plan to ask for the replacement of French diplomatic personnel if he did not receive an early reply to his request for the replacement of military personnel. (See item 26 January 61).

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2831, 17 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2851, 18 Jan 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2877, 19 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1359, 18 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1367, 19 Jan 61.

19 Jan The junction of Routes 7 and 13 were retaken by Pathet Lao forces attacking from the east (see item 10 January 61), according to the JCS Laos Situation Report. The FAL withdrawal from the crossroads was orderly, however, and FAL forces based at Luang Prabang were planning to counterattack.

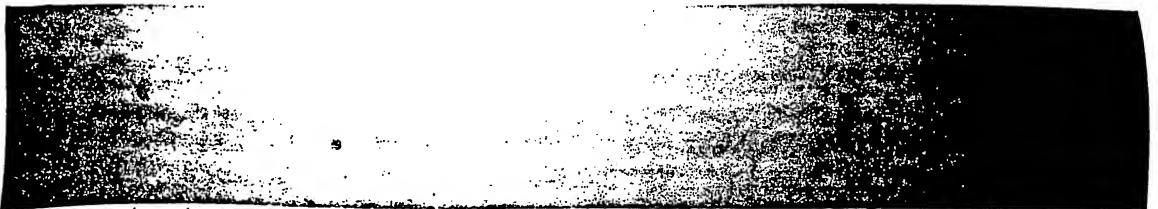
(TS) JCS Laos 16/61 (19 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

20 Jan



(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 20234Z Jan 61.

20 Jan



(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 200451Z Jan 61.

20 Jan

CHPEO informed CINCPAC that 115 Filipino technicians would be requested for the fiscal 1962 Military Training Program for Laos to perform support functions for the FAL as follows:

1) Twenty-two technicians to meet the extraordinary demands upon all logistics advisory functions. These demands arose from the disorganization of the FAL wrought by the 9 August coup, the subsequent fighting, and the defection to or capture by Kong Le of FAL technical personnel.

2) Twenty-four technicians to provide the training necessary to return to serviceability the considerable



quantity of unusable FAL equipment.

3) Twenty technicians to replace key members of the French Military Mission (FMM), whom the FAL intended to remove.

4) Forty-nine technicians to replace FMM advisors to the Laotian Air Force.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 77299, 21 Jan 61.

21 Jan

At a State-Defense meeting attended by five Department of State representatives, one CIA representative, Mr. Paul Nitze and Colonel W. S. McCrea of OSD/ISA, and Colonel D. C. Pollock, J-5, JCS, future US policies in Laos were discussed; the conferees, less Colonels McCrea and Pollock, agreed that Mr. G. McGhee of the Department of State would "put together a single policy and course of action paper to serve as the basis of recommendations to Mr. Rusk and the President (see items 22 and 23 January 61). In a memorandum for the record, Colonel Pollock listed the type of questions the Chairman, JCS, might expect at future meetings of the inter-departmental group. According to this memorandum the conferees discussed four major courses of action; these were as follows; 1. strengthening the FAL, 2. response by SEATO, 3. [establishment of a] Neutral Nations Commission in Laos, and 4. direct approach to the USSR."

The memorandum also listed significant points discussed at the meeting and the "primary methods of strengthening the RLC military situation."

(TS) Memo for Rcd, Col D.C. Pollock, USMC, J-5, JCS, "State-Defense Meeting on Courses of Action in Laos," 21 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

21 Jan

The British Ambassador to Moscow handed to the Soviet Government a British proposal for Soviet-British action, as Geneva co-Chairmen, inviting India as ICC Chairman to reconvene the ICC for Laos (see items 7 and 14 January 61). In their proposal the British also suggested a joint declaration, including the following:

. . . the two co-chairmen are agreed in requesting you to appoint a representative to go to Laos as soon as possible on an exploratory mission to propose to the King of Laos that the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos should reconvene with the duties set out below, and to ascertain, in accordance with the constitutional processes of Laos, whether this proposal would be acceptable.

The duties would be:

- a. to ascertain the facts of the present situation and to contribute to the restoration of peace in Laos, and;
- b. to recommend to the co-chairmen and to the Governments represented on the International Commission whether the International Commission can usefully function in order to help maintain the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Laos and prevent any interference in the internal

affairs of Laos, as envisaged in paragraph 12 of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference.

On 18 January, the Department of State had commented extensively on the various "identifiable national viewpoints" in the already approved text. The phrase "on an exploratory mission to propose to King of Laos" was a compromise which contained both the Canadian view that the feasibility of the return of the ICC had to be established, and the British view that the Russians would consider any ICC mission only if the mission dealt with the King, rather than with the Boun Oum regime.

The clause "in accordance with the constitutional processes of Laos" was a safeguard, required by the US, to insure that the ICC would be automatically referred to the Boun Oum Government by the King. Furthermore, the US insisted that the Indians be informed explicitly that the US expected the Indian representative to deal in fact only with the Boun Oum Government. (As of 31 January 1961 the USSR had made no reply to the UK note.)

(S) Msgs, SecState CIRCTEL, 1020, 14 Jan 61, 1039, 17 Jan 61, 1051, 18 Jan 61; NYT, 24 Jan 61, 2.

22 Jan

A State-Defense meeting was held "to effect a final coordination on a paper to be presented to the President forming the basis of policy in Laos for the new Administration" (see item 23 January 61). The participants included, among other, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chairman of the JCS, Major General Bonesteel, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy. After detailed discussion of many facets of the Laotian question, Mr. Rusk summarized his views, according to the memorandum for the record of a participant, "in this manner":

a. Step up the support of Phoumi, as much as possible, short of committing the U.S. flag. (This leaves open the matter of using aircraft of other nations - but also leaves open the use of U.S. aircraft).

b. Pursue the diplomatic possibility of some sort of a neutralized Laos, preventing any thrust to the south and pushing back anti-government forces north as in Geneva Accords. This Laos would be a buffer, but not dominated by the communists.

c. Take some action to reassure the active members of SEATO that any problem in Laos has no relation to what we do for them in event they got into trouble.

General Lemnitzer and General Bonesteel recommended, then, that:

a. Steps be taken to lift financial restrictions and get it out of the routine.

b. Positive action be taken, concurrently, on support for RTG and GVN such as giving Sarit 2 RCT's and Diem his additional 20,000 men. men.

c. Exercise care that it does not look as though U.S. was rushing into a proposal from a position of weakness in regard to the neutral nations commission.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Rusk, after discussing the briefing that was to be given to the President on the next day (see item 23 January 61), stated that "the group should know":

a. What the President would have to do to break the log jam?

b. How quickly and quietly we would interdict the airlift?

(TS) Memo for Rcd, Col D. C. Pollock, J-5, JCS "State-Defense Meeting on Courses of Action in Laos," 22 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

22-23  
Jan

In a letter to the Secretary General of SEATO, Premier Boun Oum requested SEATO assistance against "Communist interference in the domestic affairs of Laos." The letter outlined the extent of Communist support of the rebels. It requested "as a preliminary measure preceding any direct intervention" that SEATO establish a commission of inquiry in Vientiane to investigate the presence of Bloc war materials and foreign Communist elements in Laos. "The RLG would then have no recourse" the letter continued, but to ask for the assistance of SEATO "whose beneficial action would, without doubt, be of great help to it."

On the following day the SEATO Council of Representatives met to discuss the Laotian appeal. The Thai representative claimed that "since the appeal [was] made formally it is within the terms of the treaty, must be considered and necessary steps be taken to try to comply with request." The UK and French representatives agreed with Ambassador Johnson who presented the US position: the US regretted that the RLG had made the appeal without prior consultation and the US in no way accepted the implication that sending a commission would commit SEATO to direct intervention. The US Ambassador did admit, however, that the substance of the Laotian charges "well corresponded to the facts as we know them." He informed the representatives that the letter of the RLG might make the USSR more receptive to a "reasonable attitude" on the ICC in view of its aversion to SEATO involvement in Laos.

Ambassador Johnson reported that all the representatives emphasized "that any substantive reply to the RLG must make perfectly clear that SEATO could not accept implication that sending mission would be 'preliminary' to direct intervention."

(C) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1287, 23 Jan 61 and 1288, 23 Jan 61.

23 Jan

In a "preliminary memorandum" to the Secretary of Defense the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) detailed the discussion at the White House meeting on the report by the State-Defense-CIA Task Force on Laos (see item 23 January). The conference, attended by the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chairman of the JCS, and others, devoted most of its discussion to

the recommendations of the Task Force report which were divided into two groups: "A. Courses of Action to Improve Military Situation"; and "B. Diplomatic Actions Vis-A-Vis the Soviet Government."

The Task Group recommended, under actions to be taken immediately (Phase 1), that the following military courses of action be approved and that CINCPAC be authorized to decide the timing of their implementation:

"a. [REDACTED]

"b. [REDACTED]

"c. Use of PEO personnel (expanded members, if necessary) as tactical advisers to FAL units, ostensibly as training advisers.

"d. Make use of 'silver bullets' and bounty.

"e. Establish a small U.S. logistic support group in Thailand.

"f. Augment U.S. airlift in SEA in support of RLG either with contract aircraft (CAT) or USAF aircraft.

"g. Substantial augmentation of FAL airlift by contract (20 H-34s or 43s), improved observation (3 high altitude helicopters), employment non-Lao commercial pilots and augmentation Filipino technicians.

"h. Improve SEATO intelligence collection agency.

"i. Make available to CINCPAC and CHPEO (1) necessary funds to cover existing deficit from past operations, (2) funds required urgently for current operations (3) a 'drawing account' of ten million dollars from which to meet special requirements."

Under possible additional military actions (Phase 2) the report listed the following:

"a. [REDACTED]

"b. [REDACTED]

"c. Preparation for commitment of U.S. aircraft if CHICOMS start fighter escort of airlift.

"d. [REDACTED]

"e. Removal of restriction on use of bombs and napalm by AT6's.

"f. [REDACTED]

The Task force recommended a., b., and c., above for immediate action by the JCS, but expressed its

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belief that the "military advantage, which would lie in the possibility of shooting down Soviet airlift, does not outweigh political disadvantages."

The Task Force recommended no diplomatic action be taken immediately (Phase I). Under "Possible future diplomatic action," however, the group recommended that under certain specified circumstances a direct approach should be made to the USSR urging that "Laos be made a test case of the ability of our two governments to work together toward peaceful objectives."

[REDACTED]

Also under possible future diplomatic action, the Task Force recommended that the US might hold bilateral discussions with SEATO members concerning a SEATO program of action which would include the following steps:

"(1) Visit by SEATO Secretary General to Laos, who would report findings to SEATO with copy to UN.

"(2) Holding of a publicly announced SEATO Council meeting to examine the nature of Communist intervention in Laos.

"(3) Stationing, subject to Thai's request, of U.S. military unit (probably a battle group and an air squadron) at Ehorat. This unit to fly SEATO flag. If members agree."

Still under possible future diplomatic action, the group recommended that the US might explore first with Laos and Cambodia, then with other allies the establishment of a neutral commission. The Group's report envisioned King Vathana inviting Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to form a neutral commission. According to the report, the commission's terms of reference might include recommendations for a cease fire, the regrouping of rival forces in the positions described in the Geneva Accord, and amnesty, the end of outside provision of supplies, a broadening of the Laotian Government, and "possibly," free elections.

Finally, the Task Force recommended that the US might in the future put "Direct Pressure on Our Allies for Solidarity" through messages "emphasizing the importance the new Administration places on concerted action in face of growing general threat and specifically urging coordinated support of the RLG."

In the White House discussion the Secretary of Defense stated that the recommended actions to be taken at once to improve the military situation (a. through i. above), though helpful, would not reverse the unfavorable long range prospects in Laos. The Secretary also "pointed up the issue" of the militarily desirable interdiction of the Soviet airlift by means of the "possible additional military actions" (a. through c., above), versus the Department of State's concern that

these actions "would greatly impair" the prospects for political negotiations. The Secretary of State replied that, although he would not reject these three additional military actions, before undertaking these actions he wanted, first to arrive at a strategic appreciation of the general problem of security in Southeast Asia with the UK and France, and then "talk to the USSR." The Secretary of State also held the view that the US should increase its support of Thailand and Vietnam, and seek the creation of a composite SEATO force.

Referring to i., above, the Secretary of State pointed out the "great disparity between risks we may run into in Southeast Asia and amounts of money involved in these matters": he expressed the hope that the President would authorize the Department of State to arrive at more flexible arrangements for these matters, and the President agreed.

According to the "preliminary memorandum, the President expressed concern at the weakness of the local situation in Laos coupled with the weakness of allied support for our position. He proposed that, if the British and French aren't going to do anything about the security of Southeast Asia, we tell them we aren't going to do it alone. They have as much or more to lose in the area than we have." General Lemnitzer emphasized the great importance of Laos to the security of Southeast Asia and to US relations with US allies in the area.

In the discussion which followed it was the "impression, confirmed by a call to McGeorge Bundy," of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) that the Department of Defense was "authorized, but not directed," to carry out the immediate military actions a. through i., above, which "continue to appear to be wise after further detailed exploration." Among these measures, however, c. was subject to State and Defense Department clarification of the legal status of the PEO personnel engaged as tactical advisers to FAL units, and to clearance with the French in Laos.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Secretary of State summarized the diplomatic steps to be taken as follows: First, the US should consult with its principal allies in an attempt to arrive at a common strategic appreciation; meanwhile, the ICC "manuever," initiated by the UK should be permitted to run its course; at the same time, the US should prepare to attempt the neutral commission approach "which might perhaps be adopted to meet a move in the United Nations with respect to the Laotian question;" also at the same time, the US should be exploring measures to bring about joint SEATO action and, possibly, the creation of a SEATO commission.

(TS) Memo, ASD/ISA to SecDef, 1-18062/61, 23 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

23 Jan The President approved the "immediate military and paramilitary proposals" outlined in paragraphs a. through i. of the State-Defense-CIA Task Force report. (See item 23 January, immediately above.) It was the President's understanding, however, that "increased activity by American military personnel would be authorized only

in the light of advice from Vientiane." (See paragraph c. under military courses of action to be undertaken at once, in item 23 January, immediately above.) Furthermore, political negotiations and proposals were to be "left in the hands of the Secretary of State in accordance with the outline of prospective immediate steps which he presented" at the meeting. (See last paragraph of item 23 January, immediately above.)

(S) Memo, Bundy to SecState and SecDef, "Discussion on Laos in Cabinet Room, Jan 23," 23 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

23 Jan The US Ambassador in Moscow commented to the Secretary of State upon Soviet military intentions in Laos. The Ambassador reported that, while the USSR was not willing to expand its actions in Laos beyond meeting the challenge of the US, it nevertheless would not hesitate to meet any challenge the US offered in that country. The Soviets did not want the Laotian problem to assume any greater international magnitude, but any reaction of theirs would be made easier if they were able to place the onus upon the US.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1721, 23 Jan 61.

23 Jan CHJUSMAG, Thailand discounted the possibility of Thai objections to the expenditure of US funds to train FAL units in Thailand (see item 20 January 61). The Thai, said CHJUSMAG, had been scrupulous in administering funds under JUSMAG guidance during the "Erawan" project for training Lao paratroopers in Thailand.

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 231000Z Jan 61.

23 Jan CHPEO reported that on 21 January Phoumi had confided that he considered the military situation "grave." Phoumi desired to activate four additional battalions and had already started to organize one at Paksane. CHPEO had pointed out to Phoumi that additional battalions would be of little use unless properly trained; Phoumi had agreed and had requested that the PEO assume this training responsibility and commence the training of the one battalion being organized. CHPEO intended to assign one team to train this battalion. CHPEO considered that PEO could provide individual and unit training for the remaining three battalions. CHPEO concluded his discussion of the subject by recommending that the four battalions be authorized and that PEO proceed with the necessary planning.

CHPEO also reported that a PEO representative was now physically installed in Phoumi's headquarters and that Phoumi had consented to the placing of Laotian Training Advisory Groups (LTAG's) with the various Laotian battalion headquarters. CHPEO commented that this placement of US advisors would aid PEO in keeping abreast of FAL and Pathet Lao activities.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 78041, 24 Jan 61.

24 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Secretary seek governmental approval of 1) a minimum goal in Laos, already recommended by the JCS (see item 14 January 61), and 2) the implementation of the "Recommended Political-Military Actions in Laos" attached to their communication. Reiterating several of the statements made in their earlier memorandum



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the JCS went on to say that the Sino-Soviet Bloc would undoubtedly attempt to prevent the consolidation of the Boun Oum/Phoumi regime in Laos and to enlarge the area under Communist control. Any positive Free World action that would jeopardize minimum objectives of the Bloc in Laos would result in a Sino-Soviet reassessment of the risks entailed in Laos. It was "essential to recognize," said the JCS, that increasing the level of US activities in Laos presupposed US willingness, if necessary, "to challenge" Bloc aggression in Southeast Asia over the issue of Laos. The US must, therefore, be ready to take the steps necessary to counter such aggression. Included in these steps was preparation for overt US intervention. Appropriate increased readiness measures should be taken "now."

The JCS also called attention to adverse affects on the military situation in Laos resulting from the "unfortunate reactions and attitudes of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government, our SEATO allies, other Free World nations, the Bloc countries and the American public." Even the US news media had been "basically critical" of the US effort in Laos. It seemed to the JCS that US was not doing enough to influence public opinion at home and abroad.

In the appendix to their memorandum the JCS stated that the recommended political-military actions provided a comprehensive list of the measures that could be taken "to bring conditions in Laos to a satisfactory level"; the list was based on comments and recommendations stemming from CINCPAC, the Services, and other agencies of the Department of Defense.

The compilation was as follows:

1) For immediate action:

a. Release of a Presidential statement making, among others, the following points:

(1) The sole US objective in Laos was a free independent and territorially intact Laos.

(2) The US did not desire to establish any military base in Laos, nor did it seek to draw Laos into any defense alliance or treaty obligation.

(3) The US aid programs for Laos were designed solely to assist that nation.

(4) The US would do all in its power to preserve the peace and integrity of Laos.

(5) The US was well aware of its obligation to Laos under SEATO.

b. 

c. 

d. Prepare for use South Vietnamese AD-6 aircraft for ground attack missions in Laos.

e. [REDACTED]

f. [REDACTED]

g. Provide aircraft capable of supporting RLG offensive in the Plaines des Jarres, and controlling air space over Laos.

h. Be prepared to provide United States air support to Laos if Soviet Bloc jet cover is provided to communist resupply activities.

i. Remove all restrictions on the use of bombs and napalm.

j. [REDACTED]

k. [REDACTED]

l. Exert continuous pressure on Phoumi and FAL to mount major partisan effort by Meo and tribal Thai groups against Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces in Xieng Khouang-Sam Neua area and permit support with Program Evaluation Office (PEO) [REDACTED]

m. Encourage Phoumi to make intensive campaign to win support Lao people and other ethnic groups utilizing all psywar and other resources available to him.

n. Establish an invigorated intelligence collection capability in Southeast Asia, with emphasis on the collection of military information to satisfy Department of Defense requirements for contingency plans.

o. Provide necessary support and assurance to Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand to encourage their immediate preparation of forces for rapid commitment to Laos if needed.

p. Provide without delay the funds required to finance the FY 60 budget deficit of \$1.1 million and allocate special contingency funds in amount 10 million dollars so operations are not conducted on "hand to mouth" basis. Such funds would permit expansion FAL forces for period emergency, equipping forces, procurement additional airlift, and installation better communication and intelligence nets.

q. Increase the prestige and personnel strength of the PEO.

r. Augment AFL air transport with enough RTG crews and aircraft to permit simultaneous drop of at least one parachute battalion.

2) For action as soon as reasonably possible:

a. Establish a tailored U.S. Logistic Support Group in Thailand.

b. Convert three infantry FAL battalions into parachute battalions.

c. Step up covert and overt military assistance to Laos, short of military intervention, to include such measures as the provision of additional helicopters through Air America.

d. Be prepared to activate new FAL units as required.

e. [REDACTED]

f. As suggested by Ambassador Johnson, obtain overt expression of serious SEATO concern in form of all or combination of following:

(i) Resolution under Article IV (2) for all feasible support and assistance, short of intervention SEATO forces, to RLG for defense its independence and territorial integrity.

(ii) Special SEATO Council meeting in accordance Article V.

(iii) Visit to Laos by SEATO Secretary General.

(iv) Visit to Laos by SEATO military "fact finding group" in response to RLG invitation.

g. Ensure forceful public information measures by all government agencies to emphasize U.S. support of RLG and to discredit communist intervention.

h. In addition to increasing the strength and prestige of the PEO, staff the rest of the Laos Country Team with personnel who will have the confidence of the Boun Oum/Phoumi government, and who have the experience, resolution and stature to ensure maximum U.S. influence over the RLG.

3) Long range actions:

a. [REDACTED]

b. Modernize the Lao Air Force.

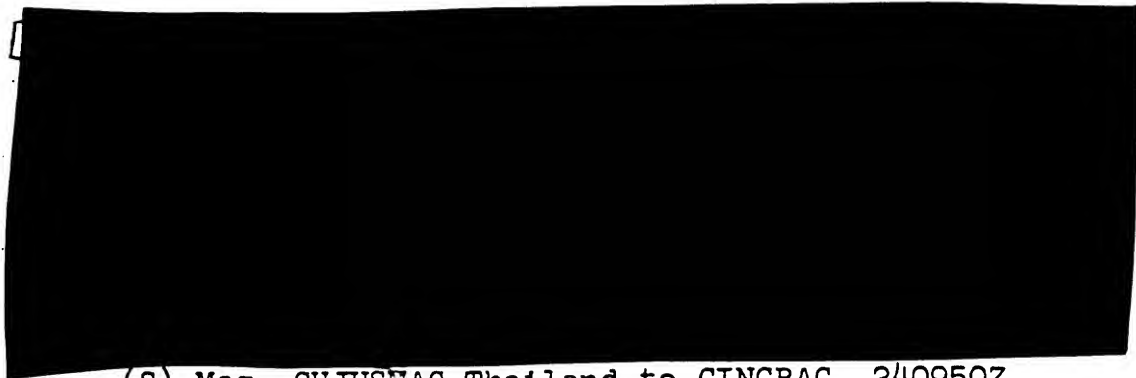
c. Augment the C-46/47 fleet now operating in Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam with C-123s

d. Establish a MAAG in Laos.

(See item 28 January 61.)

(TS) JCSM-34-61, 24 Jan 61, derived from (TS)  
JCS 1992/903, JMF Laos.

24 Jan.



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 240950Z  
Jan 61.

25 Jan

At the SEATO Council of Representatives meeting to consider the appeal of the RLG (see item 22 January 61), Australia proposed the formation of an informal SEATO inquiry commission composed of the SEATO nations' ambassadors to Vientiane. This commission would investigate the Laotian charges and, if possible, reach a common assessment of the facts. At the same time, the RLG would be informed that the establishment of such a commission in no way committed SEATO to intervention in Laos, nor was it meant to prejudice current international moves, including the re-establishment of the ICC. (See item 30 January 61.)

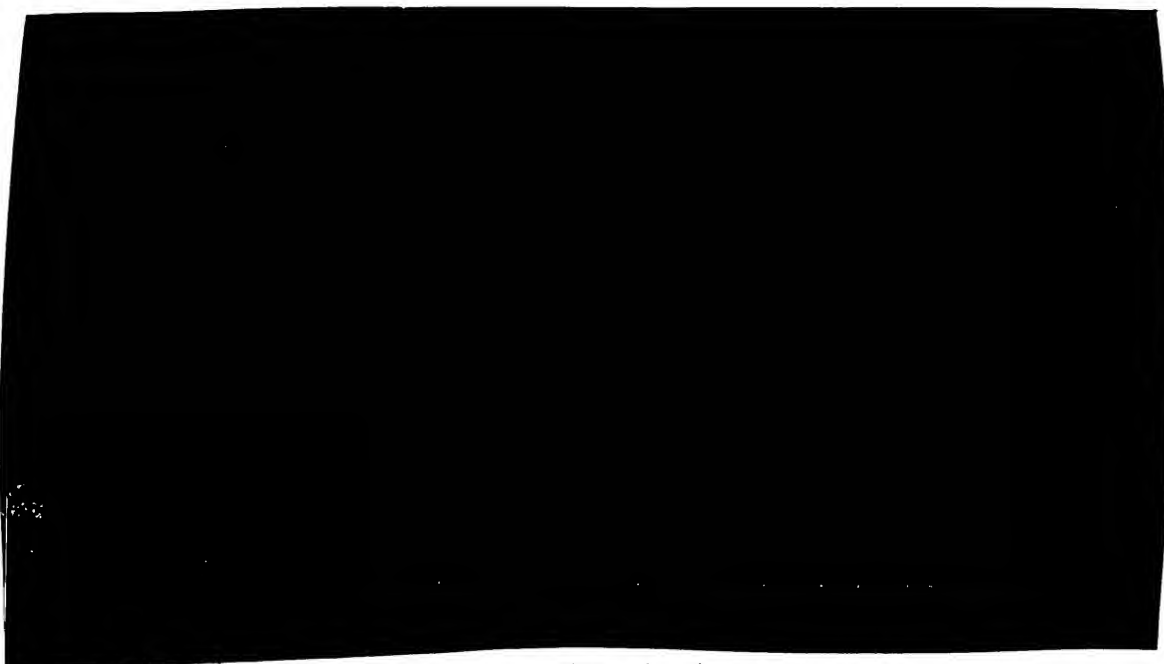
(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1301, 25 Jan 61.

26 Jan

The JCS advised CINCPAC of the courses of action approved by the President on 23 January, and authorized, at CINCPAC's discretion, the implementation of courses b., c., e., f., g., and h. [redacted] and course i. was to implemented in Washington (see item 23 January 61). The JCS cautioned CINCPAC that course c., the deployment of PEO advisors to Laotian combat units, was not to proceed beyond the guidelines that CINCPAC had set forth on 13 January (see item).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 989331, 26 Jan 61.

26 Jan



(TS) CM-71-61, 26 Jan 61; (TS) Ltr, Asst SecDef (ISA) to SecDef, X-18080/61, 31 Jan 61. Both in CJCS 091 Laos.

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26 Jan In a memorandum to the Chairman, JCS, the Director of the Joint Staff forwarded a status report on all the military courses of action concerning Laos, approved by the President.  
(TS) Memo, Dir, JS to Chairman, JCS, "Status of Approved Military Courses of Action in Laos," 26 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

26 Jan CHPEO reported Phoumi's plan for the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres to CINCPAC. The plan called for a combined air-ground attack from the west to the edge of the Plaine, with a secondary force advancing from the south to recapture Xieng Khouang city and to interdict the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres route. CHPEO characterized this plan as less bold than CINCPAC's (see item 18 January 61), but stated that it could be initiated with available resources. CHPEO recommended that Phoumi be supported in this venture, unless the US could assure Phoumi that it was prepared to support a bolder operation including air strikes and additional air transportation.  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 78761, 26 Jan 61.

26 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Department of Defense assume a position in support of the "continued presence" of the French Military Mission in Laos and the retention by France of the Seno Base. (The memorandum was in response to a 6 August 60 request by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for the views of the JCS on the "attitude" the US should take if France asked the US to intercede with the Laotian Government in order to continue French title of the Seno Base.)

Judging by recent reports from Laos, said the JCS, General Phoumi seemed determined not only to do away with French control of the Seno Base but to oust the French Military Mission (FMM) as well. Moreover there were indications that France was "unwilling or unable" to face up to the rising tide of anti-French feeling in the Laotian Government. France had indicated the Seno question was just one of several problems which must be renegotiated "at the proper moment." The JCS believed that the "precipitate ouster" of the French at this time would result in grave consequences for Laos and for US objectives in the area.

The JCS recommended therefore, that the Secretary urgently seek governmental approval of the following steps:

a. Representations to France by the Department of State designed to convince the French that a compromise on their part is essential in order to forestall more drastic demands by the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government. Specifically, the French should be urged to agree to: (1) relinquish title to SENO Base in return for continued joint occupancy rights; (2) the immediate revision of the U.S.-French Memo of Understanding of 1959 concerning PEO activities which would allow the United States to assume greater control of the joint FAL training program; and, (3) the establishment of a legitimate U.S. MAAG in Laos when the

Boun Oum/Phoumi Government has been firmly established in Free World opinion.

b. Representations to the RLG by the Department of State designed to gain Lao acceptance of the measures outlined above.

(See item 29 January 61.)

(TS) JCSM-36-61, 26 Jan 61, derived from JCS 1992/399, JMF Laos.

27 Jan The US Ambassador in Cambodia reported the Thai and Burmese replies to Sihanouk's 14-nation proposal (see item 1 January 61).

Burmese Premier U Nu had not expressed opposition to the proposal, but voiced doubts about the efficacy of such a conference.

Thai Prime Minister Sarit had agreed to a conference, provided that its objectives were to:

1. stop foreign intervention;
2. safeguard against future intervention;
3. assist Laos in maintaining its unity and territorial integrity;
4. help Laos if it desires to establish free and democratic institutions.

Sihanouk had quickly accepted the Thai objectives.

(U) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 906, 23 Jan 61; 952, 29 Jan 61; 959, 31 Jan 61.

27 Jan CHPEO, Laos informed CINCPAC that Phoumi had agreed to the training of three of the four new FAL infantry battalions (see item 23 January 61)

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 79385, 27 Jan 61.

27 Jan CHPEO advised CINCPAC that the Intelligence MTT was debriefing CAT aircrews on an ad hoc basis at Vientiane and Luang Prabang (see item 17 January 61). CHPEO noted that this urgent requirement upon the MTT was preventing it from fulfilling completely its primary mission of developing intelligence capability within the FAL; CHPEO foresaw a need for additional combat intelligence personnel.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 272000Z Jan 61.

27 Jan The Government of Laos admitted that it had cried "wolf" in alleging a North Vietnamese invasion (see item 2 January 61). A Laotian official said that this ruse was meant as internal propaganda to convince the Laotian people that the Boun Oum Government had international support.

NYT, 27 Jan 61, 1.

28 Jan Ambassador Brown secured from the Laotian Government approval of an exploratory approach to the King by the Indian ICC mission. (See items 7, 9, and 21 January 61.)  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1442, 28 Jan 61.

28 Jan Prince Sihanouk expressed, in a letter to President Kennedy, his continued hope that a 14-nation conference would be held (see item 1 January 61) in line with Thai objectives (see item 27 January 61).

The effect of this letter, according to the US Ambassador to Cambodia, was to "put onus for success or failure his 14-Nation Conference proposal squarely on US."

(U) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 955, 29 Jan 61, 956, 30 Jan 61.

28 Jan The Secretary of Defense provided the Secretary of State with an extract of the memorandum on Laos sent by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on 24 January 61 (see item) and a copy of the two enclosures to that memorandum. In his covering letter the Secretary of Defense stated that, while the "Interdepartmental Task Group on Laos" had been working on the paper subsequently considered at the White House Conference of 23 January (see item), the JCS had also been engaged in studying the Laotian problem. The JCS had recommended, said the Secretary, a "'minimum goal'" and the implementation of many specific actions concerning Laos. The minimum goal was "substantially in accord" with the goal approved at the White House Conference and "appear[ed]" to call for no further consideration. The recommended courses of action, however, had not been "specifically considered" at the Conference of 23 January. The Secretary recommended, therefore, that the Interdepartmental Task Group on Laos be reconvened to study "these proposals with a view to recommending approval, disapproval or reference to the President, as appropriate."

(TS) N/H JCS 1992/903, 2 Feb 61.

29 Jan In a lengthy message to the JCS, CINCPAC warned that the US could not accept a RLG defeat in the battle for the Plaine Des Jarres; that Kong Le would commit his "maximum resources" to this decisive battle; and that extraordinary measures might be necessary to save Phoumi. CINCPAC reasoned that any peaceful solution which might be reached would be affected by the respective military positions of the RLG and PL.

On the next day CINCPAC informed the JCS that he "had been disturbed by [the] pessimistic tone" of Ambassador Brown's analysis of the Laotian crisis (see item 18 January 61). He again pleaded that the current restrictions on his support for the FAL be lifted.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 7186, 29 Jan 61, 7496, 30 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

29 Jan Messages from Vientiane reported that the Laotian Government had informed the French Embassy in Vientiane that FAL units would take over "required" portions of Seno air base, and that Seno would henceforth be considered a Laotian base (see item 19 January 61).

On the following morning, the US Embassy reported that the French Ambassador had prevailed upon Phoumi to



modify his position. It reportedly was agreed that the Laotians would not move on to the base until 10 February, and that negotiations would be undertaken to reach a Franco-Laotian agreement on the status of Seno.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1447, 29 Jan 61;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1448, 31 Jan 61.

29 Jan CHPEO informed CINCPAC that Phoumi refused to use Laotian T-6's in strikes against the Soviet airlift over the Plaine des Jarres because of the enemy anti-aircraft defenses in the area. CHPEO also reported that Phoumi although he recognized the value of air strikes against enemy positions in the PDJ area, felt that such strikes required a plane with the capabilities of a B-26. CHPEO, however, doubted the ability of Laotian pilots to handle this type aircraft.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 79728, 29 Jan 61.

30 Jan The US Embassy in London reported to the Secretary of State that the UK had expressed disappointment that the US had not stressed the importance of delaying SEATO action until the Sovietshad replied to the proposed reactivation of the ICC (see item 21 January 61). The UK warned that any SEATO action was likely to jeopardize the ICC proposal. (As of 31 January 61 the SEATO Council of Representatives had made no formal reply to the RLC appeal, nor had it reached any decision on the Australian proposal [see item 25 January 61].)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3065, 30 Jan 61.

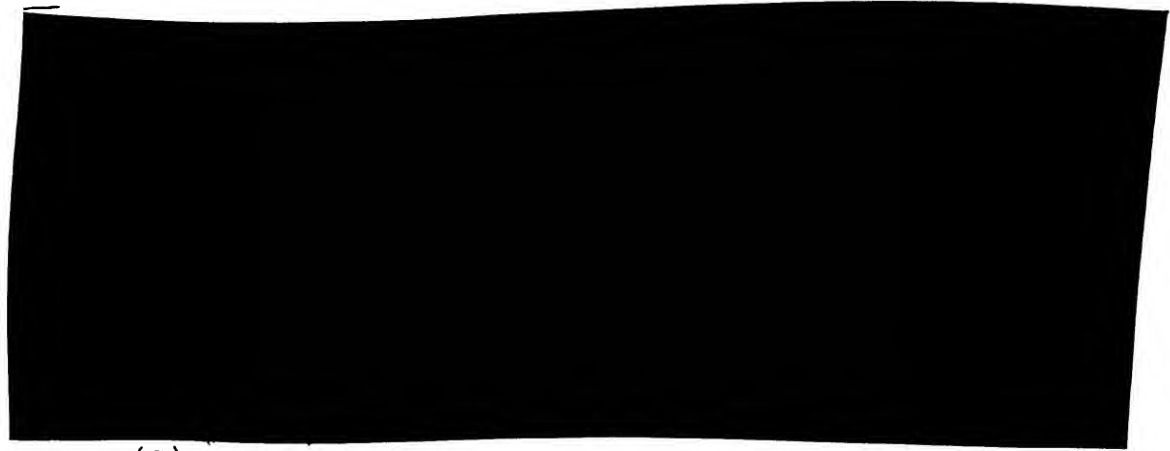
31 Jan CHPEO recommended that the proposed US logistic support group in Thailand (course e. of the proposed military courses of action approved by the President on 23 January--see item) store and service ammunition, communications equipment, and weapons. CHPEO noted that MAP procedures allowed war reserve stockage only for ammunition but believed it "highly desirable" that stocks of weapons and communications equipment also be stored in Thailand.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80312, 31 Jan 61.

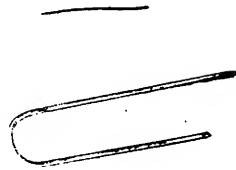
31 Jan CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that the effective use of the T-6's was seriously hampered by Phoumi's decision that the FAL pilots were the final authority on the conduct of any mission. CHPEO reported that FAL pilots had often refused to fly missions against "legitimate" targets on the basis of the alleged inadequacy of T-6 armaments and performance. CHPEO considered that the T-6 could, with proper targeting and pilot effectiveness, contribute to the FAL offensive as both a psychological and an operational weapon. CHPEO reported that there were many fixed targets suitable to T-6 attack and recommended that CINCPAC continue to seek authorization for the use of bombs. CHPEO considered, however, that air strikes by "other than T-6's" would be necessary to dislodge the Pathet Lao from their entrenched positions in the Plaine des Jarres area.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80219, 31 Jan 61.

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31 Jan



(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos and CHJUSMAG Thailand, 310234Z Jan 61.



GLOSSARY

Abbreviations

AFL - Lao Air Force  
ANL - Lao Army  
CAS - Controlled American Source  
DRV - Democratic Republic of Vietnam  
FAL - Laotian Armed Forces  
FMM - French Military Mission  
ICC - International Control Commission  
MAP - Military Assistance Program  
NLHX - Neo Lao Hak Xat - the political party of the PL movement  
PARU - Parachute Aerial Resupply Unit  
PEO - Programs Evaluation Office  
PL - Pathet Lao - a Communist-supported revolutionary movement  
in Laos  
RLG - Royal Laotian Government  
RLP - Rally of the Lao People  
RTG - Royal Thailand Government  
SEATO - Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

Important Personages

Boun Oum Na Champassac, Prince - Premier and Foreign Minister of Laos since 13 Dec 60

Brown, Winthrop G. - US Ambassador to Laos

Bunker, Ellsworth - US Ambassador to India

Diem, Ngo Dinh - President of South Vietnam

Durbrow, Elbridge - US Ambassador to Vietnam

Heintges, John A., Brigadier General, USA (Ret.) - Chief of PEO

Houghton, Amory - US Ambassador to France

Irwin, John N. - Asst. Secretary of Defense, (ISA)

Johnson, W. Alexis - US Ambassador to Thailand  
US Representative to SEATO

Knight, Robert H. - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)

Kong Le, Captain - Commander of the 2d Laotian Paratroop Battalion

Kouprasith Abhay, Colonel - Fifth Region Commander in Laos

Merchant, Livingston T. - Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Ouane Rathikone, General - Former Commander in Chief of the Royal Laotian Army

Parsons, J. Graham - Asst. Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs

Phoui Sananikone - Ex-Premier of Royal Laotian Government

Phoumi Nosavan, General - Leader of rightist forces in Laos;  
Deputy Premier in Boun Oum Government

Quinim Pholsena - Leftist leader in ex-Premier Souvanna's Cabinet

Sarit Thanarat, Field Marshal - Prime Minister (Premier) of Thailand

Savang Vathana, King - King of Laos

Sihanouk, Norodom, Prince - Chief of State of Cambodia

Sopsaisana, Prince - Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Laos)

Souphanouvong, Prince - President of the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX)

Souvanna Phouma, Prince - Neutralist ex-Premier of Laotian Government

Thompson, Llewellyn E. - US Ambassador to USSR

Tiao Somsaniith - President of National Assembly and ex-Premier of the Royal Laotian Government

~~SECRET~~  
Trimble, William C. - US Ambassador to Cambodia

Whitney, John H. - US Ambassador to Great Britain

Zellweger, Edouard - Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,  
SECOND INSTALLMENT: 1 FEBRUARY TO 31 MARCH 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION  
JOINT SECRETARIAT  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
19 MAY 1961

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The Ambassadors were also to state that the US would continue economic aid to Laos but would be prepared to withdraw its military training mission and submit its military assistance to control by the Neutral Nations Commission.

B. Circular on Neutral Nations Commission.

Under the draft proposal, King Savang Vathana was to invite Burma, Cambodia and Malaya to make up the Neutral Nations Commission. This invitation, issued through diplomatic channels, would also invite all other nations to respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutralized status of Laos and to desist from and condemn "foreign intervention in Lao internal affairs . . . not permitted by international agreements."

Upon issuance of the Lao invitation, the US would undertake the following actions:

1. Issue a unilateral declaration of respect for Lao neutralization and support for the Neutral Nations Commission.
2. Seek similar declarations by all interested powers, including US allies and the USSR.
3. Seek, "by all possible means," to persuade Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to accept the Lao invitation.
4. Seek UN Security Council action that would take note of the Lao invitation and authorize the UN Secretary General to provide appropriate assistance to the Neutral Nations Commission.

C. Circular on SEATO.

The US "has watched with growing concern for [the] future of SEATO and effect on Thailand and South Viet Nam of SEATO failure to act in [the] deteriorating Laos situation." However, there was little hope, according to the draft message, of agreement by the UK and France, and probably Australia and New Zealand, with policies which the US, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam "would regard as optimum." The US, therefore, should seek agreement within the SEATO Council of Representatives to a limited course of action comprised of the following:

1. Send the Secretary General of SEATO and/or a military group to Laos to determine whether the Lao Government could control the principal population and communication centers.
2. If the report was negative, convene the SEATO Council of Representatives to examine the nature of intervention by the Communist Bloc in Laos.
3. Seek agreement of the Council to a minimum response consisting of encouragement of the Lao Government to resist and the stationing of a US force (battle group/air squadron size) in Thailand under the SEATO flag.

D. Instruction to Moscow.

Under the draft proposal, the US Ambassador to the USSR was to invite the Soviet Government to cooperate with the US Government in achieving a neutralized Laos under the conditions set forth in the draft proposal.



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1 February - 28 February 1961 . . . . .	1-30
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- 1 Feb The Department of State, in a circular cable, stated that, according to an officer of the British Embassy in Washington Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Sobolev had "emphasized" the need for an international conference on Laos. Reportedly, Sobolev told the British Ambassador to the USSR that the Soviet Government did not believe the ICC could operate without new instructions from a conference consisting of either the participants in the Geneva Conference of 1954 or a "larger group." In either case, according to Sobolev, the Soviet Government believed the Chinese Communists should be present at the conference to speak for themselves.  
(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1140, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb Hanoi Tass reported that Prince Souphanouvong had asked the Geneva Co-Chairmen to convene without delay an international conference "analogous to [the] Geneva Conference in order [to] bring [an] end to foreign aggression in Laos and insure peace, independence and neutrality [to] Laos."  
(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1812, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb To forestall Souvanna from possibly throwing in his lot with Kong Le and the Pathet Lao, the Secretary of State directed the US Ambassador to Cambodia to suggest to the British Ambassador that he advise Souvanna not to commit himself at a time when the new US Administration seemed about to evolve an important new policy towards Laos.  
(S) Msg, SecState to Phnom Penh, 662, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb CINCPAC informed the JCS that he concurred in the recommendation of CHPEO to approve Phoumi's request for funds and equipment for four new infantry battalions (see item 23 January). In CINCPAC's opinion, these additional forces were urgently needed to enable Phoumi to continue the offensive, consolidate areas under his control, and relieve, for training, FAL units then in combat.  
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 312254Z, 31 Jan 61 (rec'd 1 Feb 61).
- 1 Feb A survey by CHPEO revealed that only 30 of a former 193 French military personnel were still engaged in training and logistical activities for the FAL. "It is obvious," reported the PEO Chief, "that this progressive decrease in French training and advisory personnel has left a void which has had an adverse effect on FAL efficiency."  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80693, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb The Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman, JCS, that the JCS proposal to install a MAAG in Laos (see item 14 January) "would not be in consonance with the overall approach of the United States toward solution of the Laos problem. Accordingly, the proposal . . . will be held in abeyance for the present." Representatives of the Defense and State Departments had considered the installation of a MAAG in Laos but, while recognizing the advantages of such a step, had concluded that anticipated political repercussions would outweigh them.
- The Deputy Secretary recognized the desirability of increasing US responsibility for military training in Laos and assured the Chairman, JCS, that efforts would be made to reach agreements to that end with the Lao and French Governments.  
(S) Memo, Deputy SecDef to CJCS, 1 Feb 61, 1st N/H to JCS 1992/890.

1 Feb

In negotiations on the status of Seno Air Base the French Ambassador, according to an official of the French Foreign Office, was able to persuade Phoumi to postpone the scheduled Lao takeover of the base (see item 29 January) from 1 to 5 February. According to Phoumi, this takeover would be "symbolic" and would involve only buildings already the property of the Laotian Government. The French Government instructed the Commander of Seno to receive FAL forces amicably if they demanded access to the base on 5 February but to take no official cognizance of their presence.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1452, 1 Feb 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3052, 1 Feb 61.

1 Feb

The Australian representative presented to the SEATO Council of Representatives his Government's proposed answer to a request of the Laotian Government for a SEATO investigation of Communist military intervention in Laos (see item 22-23 January). The Australian plan called for an investigation by the Ambassadors to Laos of the SEATO nations. This investigation would seek to determine 1) how much war material had been delivered to Laos by Soviet planes, 2) the extent to which foreign Communist elements were present in the ranks of the Pathet Lao, and 3) the extent of deliveries of war material and personnel by land from North Vietnam.

Alexis Johnson, the US Ambassador to Thailand, reported that Thailand and Pakistan supported the Australian proposal wholeheartedly, while New Zealand was willing to accede if all other SEATO powers accepted it. France and Britain were opposed, the former "on principle" and the latter for fear of jeopardizing the negotiations concerning the ICC (see item 21 January). Ambassador Johnson stated that for the time being the US was "not able to take definite action."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1350 and 1351, both 1 Feb 61.

2 Feb

Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in a speech in Peking, called for an international conference on Laos preceding any resumption of operations by the ICC. According to the US Consul General in Hong Kong, this was a reversal of the Chinese Communist position stated on 28 December 1960 that the ICC should be reconvened first, and only if it failed should an international conference be called.

At the same time, continued the US diplomat, the Communists were making a determined effort to strengthen the claims of legality of the Souvanna Phouma Government. Several recent reports emanating from Hanoi and Xieng Khouang stated that while "Premier Phouma was staying abroad," certain members of the Souvanna group were to "be in charge all affairs of state," and that Souvanna would return to Laos soon and "continue to assume [responsibility for] affairs of [the] country."

(C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1338, 4 Feb 61.

2 Feb

A draft proposal intended to neutralize Laos with respect to the conflicts of the Cold War through a "Neutral Nations Commission" (NNC) was proposed to the Governmental Task Force on Laos by its Chairman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs J. Graham Parsons (see item 10 February for announcement of this policy to US Embassies).

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The proposal, which included a basic concept and the specific steps for carrying it out, was presented in five parts, as follows:

- A. Circular "Concept" Message.
- B. Circular on Neutral Nations Commission.
- C. Circular on SEATO.
- D. Instruction to Moscow.
- E. Recommended Lines of Action, Objectives, and Time Table.

A. Circular "Concept" Message.

The US should, according to the draft proposal, explore the "feasibility of a 'neutral nations commission' centering around Cambodia and Burma with suitable flexibility for additions." These countries were selected because, though "neutral and troublesome," they were "anti-Communist domestically," wished a "non-Communist Laos in their own self-interest," and had "themselves taken initiatives consistent with [the] approach we have in mind." In addition, the Communist Bloc was "actively wooing them and would find it difficult [to] rebuff their efforts on behalf of peace."

The "heart" of the draft proposal was an "understanding" between the US and the USSR. Because the Soviet Union might feel that time favored the Communist cause in Laos, the US might have to bring military and political pressure to bear before an "understanding" with the USSR could be achieved.

To assure close collaboration between the US and its closest allies and to reassure the Asian allies, the US planned to propose, at a special meeting called for the purpose, that SEATO "undertake certain limited actions all short of SEATO intervention in Laos, but designed [to] show [that] SEATO [was] prepared [to] act if necessary."

Upon the receipt of a signal to "execute," US Ambassadors to SEATO Nations were to make a presentation to their host governments along the following lines: 1) urge active support of the Laotian Government of Boun Oum as the legitimate Government of Laos even though, ideally, it should be broadened to be more representative of the Lao people; 2) explain that the US conceived of Laos as a "neutral state, unaligned in her international relations" and without foreign military bases, foreign troops, or military alliances; and 3) state that the US had suggested to the Laotian Government that it proclaim the neutrality of Laos by a "declaration which all interested governments would be invited to respect."

The Ambassadors should then, according to the draft proposal, explain the "Neutral Nations Commission," giving as its duties the following: 1) to stop in Laos "all foreign military intervention . . . in contravention of international agreements and inconsistent with [the] status of Laos as a neutral;" 2) to bring about a "cease-fire and regroupment" of Pathet Lao forces in Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces; and 3) to establish machinery for supervision of "military material and equipment required for defense and maintenance [of] law and order."

The Ambassadors should also point out that, if the peaceful proposals failed, SEATO had an obligation to defend the "integrity of Laos and security of Southeast Asia which [the] outcome of the struggle in Laos will vitally affect."

E. Recommended Lines of Action, Objectives, and Timetable.

This portion of the draft proposal called for the continuation of military measures already decided upon (see item 23 January) and a timetable integrating, chronologically, all US actions. This portion also summarized the broad objectives of US policy in Laos already developed in the other parts of the draft proposal.

The Director of the Joint Staff, in a memorandum for the JCS, concluded that the State Department draft proposal, with modifications, was "acceptable from a military standpoint." The modifications proposed were as follows:

6. a. Insure Laos is not stripped of U.S. training and operational support without explicit simultaneous phase-in of neutral substitute agencies with comparable demonstrated capabilities.

b. Insure the Neutral Nations Commission will have means in fact to observe, control or inhibit Pathet Lao preparations for eventual take-over of Laos.

c. Insure that no military ultimatum is issued to the USSR prior to making necessary political and military preparations.

d. Insure that indication is given of long-term measures that must be initiated to reduce present Communist influence in Laos.

The Director of the Joint Staff recommended that the JCS "approve the above conclusions as a basis for further coordination on this subject."

(TS) "Proposed State Department Message," JMF, Laos;  
(TS) Memo, Director of the Joint Staff to the JCS, "State Department Draft Proposal Concerning Laos," DJSM-136-61, 3 Feb 61.

2 Feb

CHPEO advised CINCPAC that "the greatly increased tempo of operations within [the] FAL makes it necessary to add materially to [the] PEO advisory staff." At the higher levels, particularly in Air Force and Engineer matters, additional personnel were urgently needed for planning and advisory functions. At the lower levels an increase in staff was required because of the growing number of geographical locations where the FAL needed logistic advice, and the increased requirements for maintenance and repair of equipment.

The vacuum created by the reduction of the French military advisory activities (see item 1 February) was, in the opinion of CHPEO, an additional reason for an augmentation of his staff.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 81318, 2 Feb 61.

3 Feb

The Soviet airlift from Hanoi to the Pathet Lao forces was reported to be continuing at the rate of two sorties a day. According to a Canadian military attache who had just returned from North Viet Nam, the quantity of material being airlifted appeared to be far in excess of the requirements for the defensive actions in which the Pathet Lao was engaged.

(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1337, 3 Feb 61.

- 3 Feb The JCS approved CHPEO's request for an augmentation of PEO by nine US Army Special Forces teams (Monkhood) on a 180-day basis. It was estimated that these teams would arrive in Vientiane in increments of three teams each on 1 March, 1 April, and 1 May.  
(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990154, 3 Feb 61.
- 3 Feb The US military attache in Laos reported that according to the commander of the Laotian First Military Region (bordering on Burma) approximately 6,000-7,000 Chinese Nationalist troops had entered Laos from Burma between 28 and 30 January.  
(S) Msg, USARMA Laos to DA, DA IN 81402, 3 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The CHPEO advised CINCPAC that Phoumi was enthusiastic about a program for providing Thai technical specialist volunteers for the FAL (see item 23 January).  
The CHPEO listed 385 military specialist billets which, in his opinion, were needed to provide necessary specialist and technical support to the FAL.  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 81837, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The Secretary of Defense approved CINCPAC's request for 115 additional Filipino military technicians (see item 20 January) provided they were used not to replace personnel of the French Military Mission but "to supplement and improve the current effort in the logistic field."  
(S) Msg, OSD (CM & TD) to CINCPAC, DEF 989769, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The Chinese Communist radio reported a statement by the Chinese Communist Vice Premier that "support by the Soviet Government to Laos in response to [the] request [of the] lawful government [of] Laos headed by Prince [Souvanna] Phouma is in accordance with international practice and is righteous action. . . . If [the] lawful Government of Laos . . . asks support from China, [the] Chinese Government too will certainly give it."  
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1471, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The strategic road junction of Routes 7 and 13 was taken by the FAL, according to the JCS Laos Situation Report. Recapture of this road junction placed in friendly hands the primary ground communication route between Vientiane and Luang Prabang for the first time since January and opened the way for a drive on the Communist-held Plaine des Jarres.  
(TS) JCS Laos Sit Rep 32-61, 5 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The British Ambassador to Cambodia, having agreed to use his influence with Souvanna (see item 1 February), obtained an interview with the former Lao Premier. In this interview Souvanna stated that he planned a brief visit "of one or two days in the 'near future' to the Pathet Lao-held areas of Phong Saly and the Plaine des Jarres to see 'troops and ministers loyal to me.'" Following this trip, Souvanna said, he planned to visit various world capitals, including Saigon, New Delhi, Cairo, Paris, London, and Moscow.  
The British Ambassador reported that his arguments to postpone this visit to Pathet Lao territory because a new US policy on Laos appeared imminent had no effect. Souvanna, in the Ambassador's opinion, was still determined to go.  
(S) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 981, 3 Feb 61, and 991, 6 Feb 61.

4 Feb Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that a Laotian takeover of Seno (see item 1 February) would involve the US in the French-Lao differences over the base. PEO logistics personnel had been assisting FAL operations at Seno for months. Also PEO training personnel might be required to visit FAL units moved to Seno.

In view of these anticipated difficulties the Ambassador requested guidance from the Department of State (see item 8 February).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1472, 4 Feb 61.

5 Feb The Laotian Government installed several "Headquarters elements" in the airport passenger office and other minor facilities at Seno. According to a French Embassy officer in Vientiane, the French Ambassador had protested this "unilateral procedure" to the Laotian Government, but the French Government still hoped to "arrange matters quietly."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1480, 6 Feb 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1480, 6 Feb 61; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3121, 7 Feb 61.

6 Feb The Government of the Republic of China declared its opposition to either the reactivation of the ICC or a 14-Nation Conference as proposed by Prince Sihanouk. In an informal note handed to the US Ambassador, the Chinese Nationalist Government stated that either of these proposals would contain a "built-in mechanism of Communist domination" and would mean "abdication of free world leadership in Laos and pave the way for a final Communist takeover."

(C) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 453, 6 Feb 61.

6 Feb In response to a request from the President for a statement of the capability of the US to commit military forces to Laos, the Chairman, JCS submitted a study of "US Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," (derived from JCS 1992/912).

1. 1992/912  
2. 1992/912  
3. 1992/912  
4. 1992/912  
5. 1992/912  
6. 1992/912  
7. 1992/912  
8. 1992/912  
9. 1992/912  
10. 1992/912

According to this paper, the US could introduce sufficient forces into Laos within 30 days to protect key cities, communication centers, and lines of communication and to establish a secure base for subsequent operations to defeat the Pathet Lao, provided there were no overt intervention by Communist China or North Viet Nam. If North Viet Nam intervened overtly, US forces would be able to fight delaying actions and probably would be able to hold Vientiane and southern Laos. If both North Viet Nam and Communist China intervened overtly, US forces in Laos would still be able to hold Vientiane and southern Laos, provided other US and allied forces took certain counteractions outside Laos that would directly affect operations in Laos.

Intervention by US forces to prevent a Communist conquest of Laos would, according to the JCS paper, initially reduce the over-all capabilities of the US to wage general and limited war. Assuming that military production were increased and partial mobilization carried out as a result of US intervention in Laos, this over-all capability would eventually increase.

(TS) Memo, CJCS to the President, "Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," 6 Feb 61, CJCS 091 Laos (1).  
(TS) JCS 1992/912, "Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," 3 Feb 61, JCS 9155.2/3000 (30 Jan 61)



- 6 Feb CHPEO cabled CINCPAC that Phoumi was organizing six special battalions in addition to the four for which US support had already been requested (see item 1 February). CHPEO also reported that he had informed Phoumi that the US Government had made no provision to pay or equip these six units; in addition, competent officers and noncommissioned officers would be difficult for Phoumi to obtain.
- (On 7 February, CINCPAC concurred in the action taken by CHPEO.)  
(S) Msg, CHPEO, Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 82068, 6 Feb 61.
- 6 Feb The FAL jumped off to seize the Plaine des Jarres by an attack on two fronts. Force Sam Sen Thai (SST) moved east from RJ 7 and 13, while Force Phou Phieng (PP) advanced north from Vang Vieng.  
(TS) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC, DA IN 81972, 4 Feb 61.  
JCS (TS) Laos Sitrep 37-61, 10 Feb 61.
- 7 Feb Force PP, attacking the Plaine des Jarres from the South, was stopped by an enemy blocking position at Ban Ta Vieng on the southern edge of the Plaine.  
(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 34-61, 7 Feb 61.
- 7 Feb CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that approval of "cognizant Washington, D.C. authorities" be obtained to allow the use of US aircraft to fly supplies for the FAL directly to Vientiane (see item 9 February). Under existing procedures, all military supplies for Laos had to be transhipped via CAT at Bangkok. Employment of CAT aircraft for this purpose resulted in inadequate airlift for necessary logistic support of FAL combat units.  
(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 81190, 2 Feb 61, and 071820Z, 7 Feb 61.
- 7 Feb The military situation in Laos, as presented by the Chairman, JCS, to the Secretary of Defense, was as follows:
1. The Laotian Government controlled the main towns and cities of northern, southern, and western Laos except for the Phong Saly area in the north. Much of the countryside in these areas was heavily infiltrated by the Pathet Lao.
  2. The Pathet Lao forces, combined with those of Kong Le, controlled the northeastern portion of the country including the Plaine des Jarres/Xieng Khouang areas. The Pathet Lao were also active in the northeast, attacking Muong Sai, the last RLG garrison in Phong Saly Province, and in the south in the Thakhek and Attapeu areas. In general, the Pathet Lao were not conducting unusually aggressive operations, but they were being supplied by Soviet airlift with material in excess of their needs for "normal operations" in the Plaine des Jarres.
  3. The FAL was planning an offensive to retake the Plaine des Jarres. In addition, guerrilla forces of Meo mountain tribesmen were active south of Xieng Khouang.  
(TS) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Status Report on Laos for the Secretary of Defense," 7 Feb 61, CJCS-091 Laos (1).
- 7 Feb The French Ambassador in Phnom Penh, acting under instructions from Paris, pointed out to Souvanna that his visit to Xieng Khouang at this juncture could be advantageously utilized by the Soviets as evidence that Souvanna supported their intervention. Souvanna replied, the US Ambassador

informed the Secretary of State, that he was aware of this possibility, but nevertheless he felt it was essential that he visit his supporters to counter the greater danger that they would become discouraged and join forces with the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1003, 8 Feb 61.

7 Feb

The UN Secretary General advised the US delegate to the UN that he had strongly advised the Lao delegates to the UN against an appeal to the Security Council unless they had convincing factual evidence of intervention to back up their charges.

The Secretary General had also informed the Lao delegates that he hoped their government would seek to become more truly representative. If Souvanna could not be brought into the government, advised the Secretary General, at least some of his followers should be included so that "the other side" could not convert Souvanna into "another Lumumba."

(S) Msg, New York to SecState, 2136, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080340Z, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

In response to Ambassador Brown's request for guidance on the Seno problem (see item 4 February) the Secretary of State suggested that the Ambassador point out to Phoumi "that in taking action on Seno, [the] RLG would be well advised to keep three points in mind":

1. SEATO action to oppose any Communist aggression against Laos short of overt armed attack would require unanimous consent. Alienation of France by Laos would not facilitate such agreement.

2. The presence of French troops at Seno was recognized by international agreement. Forcing them off Seno might cause the French Government to withdraw all its troops from Laos, thus placing the US in an extremely difficult position because the presence of the PEO was still tied to the existence of the French Military Mission.

3. At a time when the Laotian Government needed all the support it could get, it was unwise to alienate a power which had always been friendly to Laos. Such action might also alienate other powers.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 829, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

Ambassador Brown and his Country Team concurred in the recommendation of CHPEO that his staff be increased by 73. This increase was necessary, in the opinion of the Country Team, because of the increased responsibilities assigned the PEO (see item 26 January) and because of the gradual freeze-out of the French Military Training Mission.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1489, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

The Canadian Government, according to the text of its note as published by the Cambodian press, replied to Prince Sihanouk's proposal for a 14-Nation Conference by stating its preference for reactivation of the ICC. In the opinion of the Canadians, the most "rapid and most generally

acceptable means of reducing tensions" in Laos would be through the "existing organism, that is ICC Laos." The Canadian Government, therefore, was prepared to resume its duties in the ICC if requested to do so by the Geneva Co-Chairmen and if the King of Laos agreed to it.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1008, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb According to the text published in the Cambodian press, Prime Minister Nehru of India replied favorably to Sihanouk's 14-nation proposal. But, in Nehru's opinion, the ICC should meet, not as an alternative to the conference, but as an action to prevent "progressive deterioration" of the situation in Laos while the conference was being organized. The Indian Government also wanted any new conference to be a "continuation of [the] old Geneva Conference with new terms of reference" because to break away from it would leave "no sound basis" for approaching the question.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1019, 10 Feb 61.

9 Feb Souvanna, in a letter to the US Ambassador to Cambodia, expressed his approval for a 14-Nation Conference as proposed by Sihanouk. According to Souvanna, only such a conference could end the civil war in Laos in view of the aggravated situation there. The ICC, in Souvanna's opinion, could be useful but only as an agent to carry out the decisions of the conference. As its members had already worked in Laos, the ICC could, unlike a new organization, begin its work immediately without losing precious time in familiarizing itself with Lao affairs.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1013, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb The JCS informed CINCPAC that the use of US aircraft to lift supplies for the FAL to Vientiane was not approved (see item 7 February). Use of Udorn in Thailand by US aircraft carrying military equipment to Laos was approved, and CINCPAC was directed to determine: 1) the capability of Udorn to support FAL operations; 2) facilities required to make Udorn capable of supporting planned operations; and 3) negotiations with Thailand required for use of Udorn.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990025, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that US Laotian Training Advisory and Assistance Groups (LTAGs) continue to train FAL units without a formal agreement with the French. If the French objected, the US Government should negotiate with the French Government for an agreement while the LTAGs continued their activities in Laos.

LTAGs had been established to train the FAL under a US/French agreement signed on 28 May 1959. For purposes of cover, these US training teams were placed under nominal French supervision, but there was no actual control or military command involved. Because of the coup by Kong Le on 9 August 1960, negotiations to extend the agreement beyond the expiration date of 1 September 1960 to 1 June 1961 were stopped. The LTAGs, however, continued to train FAL forces. More important, in the opinion of the JCS, the teams had provided advice and leadership without which the FAL would have been ineffective.

(TS) JCS 1992/923, Laotian Training, Advisory and Assistance Groups, 9 Feb 61.

10 Feb

The Secretary of State, in three circular messages to US Embassies, supplies "background and rationale for use as appropriate with government to which accredited" in order to explain the US concept of a neutralized Laos whose neutrality would be safeguarded by a Neutral Nations Commission. Two of these circulars had been under consideration in preliminary draft form as "Circular Concept Message" and "Circular on Neutral Nations Commission" (see item 2 February). Now issued as Circulars 1190 and 1191, they differed only slightly from the preliminary draft version.

A significant modification of the early draft proposal was the following qualification to be met before the US agreed to submit its military aid or that of its allies to the supervision of a neutral commission:

We would expect RLG to insist that there be real evidence of effectiveness of control and supervision which would deny clandestine support before assistance from ourselves, French, and other anti-Communist sources would be subject to restriction.

The third circular was a declaration of neutrality to be offered to King Savang in the hope that he would issue it. This text stated the determination of Laos to remain sovereign and independent, reaffirmed the traditional Lao policy of neutrality, and invited Cambodia, Burma and Malaya to form a commission under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia "to direct its efforts toward ensuring Laos against foreign intervention both overt and covert. . . ."

(S) SecState Circulars 1190, 1191, 1192, 11 Feb 61.

10 Feb

The British Government was impressed by the NNC concept and willing to support it at home and abroad, the Foreign Secretary informed Secretary of State Rusk. But the British doubted it would work out exactly as described, and pointed out that the Communists were committed to a conference and were therefore likely to argue that it would be necessary to hold one in order to give international approval to the NNC. In addition, neutral countries might also feel that a conference agreement between the great powers would be necessary. (The British shared the US desire to avoid a conference.)


The British were also convinced that the Boun Oum regime was unacceptable to both the Communists and the neutrals. A solution to the Laotian problem could only be reached, according to the British, "on the basis of a government of national unity which at least includes Souvanna Phouma and is committed to return to [the] sort of arrangement we had under Vientiane Agreements."

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular, 1196, 13 Feb 61.

11 Feb

Premier Chou En-Lai stated in a letter to Prince Sihanouk that the Chinese Communist Government agreed to the necessity for a 14-nation conference to end foreign interference and restore peace in Laos. As reported by the US Consul General in Hong Kong, the Chinese Premier stated that the conference was needed to "make new provisions on tasks and function" of a reactivated ICC.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1388, 17 Feb 61.

- 11 Feb The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Johnson in Thailand that the US supported an informal British suggestion for an investigation of Communist intervention in Laos by the SEATO Committee of Security Experts rather than the Australian plan for an investigation by the Ambassadors of the SEATO nations in Vientiane (see item 1 February).  
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1197, 11 Feb 61.
- 11 Feb FAL Force SST, attacking east along Route 7, was held up by an enemy defensive position on the Phou Soung Summit, about four miles east of RJ 7 and 13.  
(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 38-61, 11 Feb 61; (TS) CHPEO Laos PIR No. 2, 6 Mar 61, DA IN 90418.
- 12 Feb   
(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 84137, 12 Feb 61; (S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 171230Z Feb 61.
- 12 Feb The US Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop Brown, delivered a memorandum to the Laotian Government setting forth the US proposal for a neutralized Laos to be achieved through a Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February).  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1530, 15 Feb 61.
- 13 Feb The US Ambassador to Thailand reported that the Foreign Minister of Thailand had reacted favorably to the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February). The Thai diplomat doubted, however, that Sihanouk would accept membership on the NNC, even though he did not want a Communist Laos on the borders of Cambodia. In his opinion, Sihanouk would certainly check first with Peking and Moscow, and the Communists then would ask the Cambodian leader to query the RLG on its attitude toward incorporating the PL into the government. If there was to be any hope whatever of obtaining Communist acquiescence in the NNC concept, the RLG must be assisted and advised in making a carefully considered reply to the Communists on this point. The reply should not constitute a flat rejection but, without making any commitments, should "hold out some bait" to the Communist.  
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1441, 14 Feb 61.
- 14 Feb In remarks to the US Delegates to the United Nations, the Secretary General of the UN expressed his belief that the US proposal for neutralizing Laos was "helpful" and "constructive." He commented, however, that Laos lacked either a well-established tradition of neutrality or physical strength to enforce neutrality. A way would therefore have to be found, perhaps along the lines of Austria to obtain international acceptance of Laotian neutrality. The Secretary General also stated that a broadening of the present RLG was important and that every effort should be made to persuade Souvanna to take part.  
(S) Msg, NY to SecState, 2200, 14 Feb 61.
- 14 Feb During a presentation by Assistant Secretary of State Parsons on the US Neutral Nations Commission plan (see item 10 February), the Indian Minister to the US said that

the three proposed members of the NNC were weak, and they could not guarantee the neutrality of Laos without support by a larger ring of powers. Furthermore, said the Indian diplomat, he had gathered the impression from his Soviet colleagues in Washington that if Laos developed into another Korea, the Chinese Communists would "necessarily control" the situation. However, the Soviets had hinted that so far they were still in command.

(S) Msg, SecState to New Delhi, 2199, 15 Feb 61.

14 Feb

The Secretary of State explained the US concept of a neutral Laos (see item 10 February) to the Australian, British, Canadian, French, New Zealand, Pakistani, Philippine, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai representatives in Washington. In an informal note, the Secretary explained the US concept of a neutral Laos, "unaligned in international relations but free to exercise [the] sovereign right to manage [its] own affairs and to provide for its national integrity." Such a neutralized status would, according to the note, prohibit foreign bases or foreign troops on Lao soil except as permitted by previous agreements.

This neutralized status would be supervised by a temporary international commission centered around Cambodia and Burma. It would be established at the invitation of the King of Laos and would be reported to the UN in "some appropriate way." The responsibilities of the Commission would be to "arrange for cessation of all foreign military intervention" in Laos through effective supervision over military arms and equipment brought into the country. In the event that international neutralization did not bring about the hoped-for peace within the country, the Lao Government could request the aid of the Commission in stopping hostilities.

The US was prepared, according to the note, to have its military assistance screened by the Commission and to withdraw its military training teams when a competent neutral training mission was in place and able to perform its functions.

(S) SecState Circular, 1208, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

The US Government, in a joint State/Defense message, informed Ambassador Brown that the recommendation of the CHPEO for an increase in the FAL to 32,522 men was approved. This increase was to provide four additional infantry battalions, supporting artillery, and special forces operational detachments with necessary command elements (see items 23 January and 1 February).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 868, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

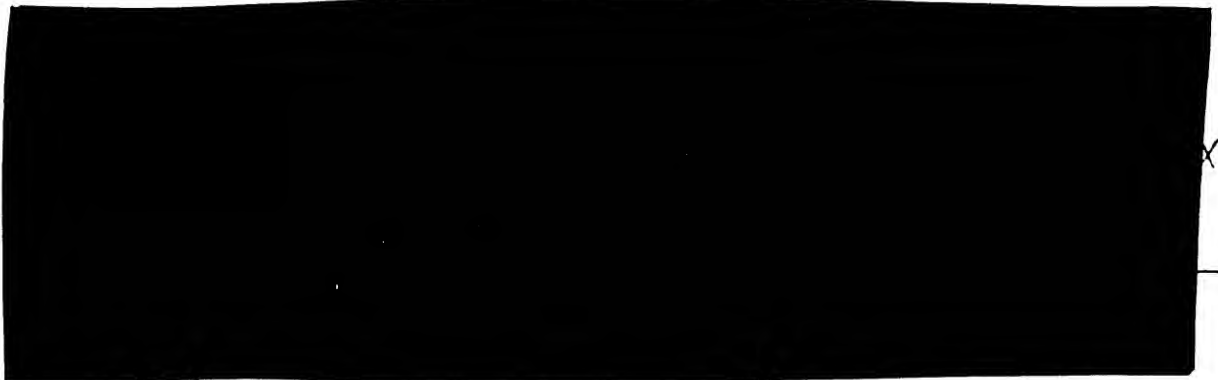
Ambassador Johnson reported that, at a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives, the British representative had proposed that SEATO limit its response to the Lao request for an investigation of Communist intervention (see item 22 January) to calling a meeting of the Council of Security Experts in Bangkok to "'analyze various national contributions' and prepare an assessment." Ambassador Johnson then suggested an amendment calling for the SEATO Council of Representatives to offer the services of the Security Experts to the Laotian Government for the purpose of making an investigation in Laos.

All representatives except the British and French had favored the US amendment. The British then suggested a

return to the Australian proposal (see item 1 February), and Johnson, hoping to get some action without further delay, had agreed to accept if all other representatives would do the same. The French refused, however, so no reply to the RLG request for an investigation could be agreed to.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1439 and 1440, 14 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 84828, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

The Canadian Government expressed a "good deal of sympathy" for the US general approach to the Laotian problem displayed in the NNC proposal. Particularly encouraging, said the Canadian Minister in reporting the reactions of his government to the Department of State, was the recognition in the US proposal that the concept of neutrality for Laos required more than a unilateral declaration to bring stability to the area while maintaining the independence and integrity of the country.

The Canadian Minister also emphasized his government's recognition of the need to broaden the Laotian Government. In addition, the Canadian Government wished to know what relation the new measures, if put into force, would have to the Geneva settlement and what effect they would have on the ICC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Ottawa, G-53, 16 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(S) Msgs, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, 131035Z and 151125Z Feb 61.

15 Feb

CINCPAC dropped all forces earmarked for and in support of JTF 116 to Defense Condition 4.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 42-61, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

King Savang Vathana stated to Ambassador Brown his approval in principle of the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission (see items 10, 12 February) but refused to make a public declaration on his own initiative as requested by the US. The King expressed his views during an interview at which the Ambassador presented the US plan. Reporting the results of this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown explained that the King did not wish to undermine the parliamentary procedures of his country by making a declaration or issuing an invitation on his own authority. The Ambassador had explained that the US had in mind a procedure comparable to the British speech from the throne in which the monarch stated the



policy of his government and, by announcing it himself, gave it the support and backing of the throne.

The King had proposed India, Burma, and Indonesia as members of the Neutral Nations Commission. The Ambassador, however, had urged that Cambodia, as the nation with the most to fear from a Communist Laos, be invited to accept membership. He had also expressed US concern that India, while professedly neutral, usually sided with the Communists, and that Indonesia might be tempted to favor the Communists to gain Soviet support against the Dutch on the West Irian question.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1530, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb General Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Cabinet had "almost completely accepted" the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission. In a message to the Secretary of State, the Ambassador reported that, according to Phoumi, the Laotian Government planned to seek final approval of the plan on 16 February at a meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by the King. Phoumi then planned to fly to Phnom Penh and offer Souvanna a cabinet post. If he accepted, the National Assembly would be convened in special session at which a politically broader government would be presented. At this same session Phoumi planned for the King to make a speech from the throne presenting the neutral commission proposal and issuing invitations for participation in the Commission.

The Ambassador had replied by repeating the arguments made to the King in favor of inclusion of Cambodia on the commission and against India and Indonesia (see item 15 February). Phoumi appeared to understand, according to the Ambassador, but did not indicate whether or not he agreed.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1528, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb The Secretary of State explained that, by "broadening" the Lao Government, the US meant "inclusion of all non-Communist elements." In a circular message to US diplomatic posts, the Secretary pointed out that inclusion of Pathet Lao representatives in the government would be "unwise," as they would, in accordance with standard Communist practice, spread their influence within the government far out of proportion to their numbers.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1214, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 151355Z Feb 61.

16 Feb The French Government concurred in the general concept of the NNC plan (see item 10 February), the French Minister in Washington informed the Department of State. But the

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French expressed grave concern that the schedule in the plan would not permit sufficient time for a US-British-French approach to the USSR in order to gain Soviet acceptance of it. A "broadening" of the Laotian Government should also be carried out, in the opinion of the French, as a prerequisite to putting into effect the NNC proposal. In addition, the French believed that the Laotian Government should relate any new neutrality proposal to the Geneva Agreement, as it was the only existing paper on Laos agreed to by the Soviets and the Chinese Communists. The French also questioned whether sufficient consideration had been given to the practical aspects of the Neutral Nations Commission, such as logistical support and finance.

In response to these points, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs advised the French Minister that the US had grave doubts regarding the wisdom of a tri-partite approach to the USSR. Such a step could have the following adverse results:

1) It could convince the Soviets that the entire concept was being stage-managed by a "white club" and that the Laotians were only puppets.

2) It could cause the Soviet Government to respond by offering its own alternative which would then lead to endless negotiations.

With regard to "broadening" the Laotian Government, the Deputy Assistant Secretary pointed out that Phoumi was arranging to make the supreme gesture of going to Phnom Penh to seek reconciliation with Souvanna. Therefore, "broadening" attempts were taking place simultaneously with plans for launching the NNC. It was pointed out to the French Minister that his Government could help by using its influence and connections to persuade Souvanna to accept Phoumi's gesture as genuine. The French Government could also assist by urging Sihanouk to accept the vital role of Chairman of the NNC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3368, 17 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The most important obstacle to Sihanouk's willingness to serve on the NNC appeared to be the emphasis the plan placed on recognizing the presently constituted RLG, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh reported to Secretary Rusk. The Cambodian Chief of State regarded the RLG as lacking popular support. In his opinion the RLG although technically invested constitutionally, had actually been

"imposed" on Laos by the US and was entirely dependent on the latter's support. Sihanouk's current position was that a fresh start, "from zero," should be made to form a government of national unity that would be truly representative of the Lao people. Therefore Ambassador Trimble believed that unless the base of the present RLG was greatly broadened, and included Souvanna, the Cambodian Chief of State would be unwilling to participate in the Neutral Nations Commission. Further, declared Trimble, Sihanouk would probably insist that the establishment of a more broadly-based government should precede rather than follow the creation of the NNC.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1051, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Council of Ministers had decided that the King would broadcast a statement of Lao neutrality on 19 February. The statement would, according to Phoumi, request support of neutral nations but would not issue specific invitations to join the Neutral Nations Commission. Invitations to Cambodia and Burma would be announced by the Laotian Government at a press conference following the King's speech on the 19th.

According to Phoumi, the Council had not decided what position to offer Souvanna nor had it discussed reorganization to broaden the government. Brown cautioned Phoumi that the offer to Souvanna should be "sincere and respectable," to prevent the burden of refusal from falling on the Lao Government rather than Souvanna.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1541, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic posts concerned with the Laos crisis that the US believed that "specific mention of Malaya as well as Cambodia and Burma" should be included in both the royal address and the Lao Government invitation to participate in the Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February).

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1219, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The British Foreign Office informed the US Embassy in London that it had instructed its Ambassador in Phnom Penh to do his utmost to persuade Souvanna to respond favorably to Phoumi's offer to join the Boun Oum government and help to bring about a cease-fire and the neutrality of Laos. However, the Foreign Office was apprehensive, the US Minister to Great Britain reported, that Souvanna would not bring himself to join a government which had revolted against him. Further, the British Ambassador would be "up against tough competition" in the Soviet Ambassador who had been seeing Souvanna regularly. If Souvanna rejected the British Ambassador's plea, he was then to urge Souvanna at least not to close the door on Phoumi in a way that would make further attempts to protect Laos "from civil war, or worse, impossible."

In British Foreign Office opinion, reported the US minister, the best way to get Souvanna to join the new

effort in Laos would be to form an entirely new government that would include persons from whom he was not so completely estranged as he was from the present RLG. The Minister stated that when an Embassy Officer had voiced the opinion that to dismantle the Boun Oum government at this time might invite catastrophic demoralization of the FAL, the British Southeast Asia Chief replied that he did not think the FAL cared very much what happened so long as it did not have to fight.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 3301, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

In response to a request from the President, the Chairman, JCS, submitted the following estimate of the maximum number of Communist Bloc military forces that could be introduced into Laos within 30 days:

1. Ground forces.

15 Viet Minh divisions	105,000 men
8 Chinese Communist divisions	48,000 men
3 Chinese Communist parachute battalions	<u>3,000 men</u>
Total ground	156,000 men

2. Air forces.

Chinese Communist jet fighters	340
Chinese Communist jet light bombers	<u>125</u>
Total aircraft	465

This estimate was of the total military force that the Communist bloc could commit to Laos within 30 days and did not take into account such factors as military objectives, geographical limitations, or competing requirements for the forces listed. For instance, it would be unrealistic for the Viet Minh to commit their whole force to Laos in view of their internal security problems and the danger of possible attack by Viet Nam.

(S) Memo, CJCS to President, "Maximum Bloc Forces in Laos," 16 Feb 61, CJCS-091 Laos (1).

16 Feb

The SEATO Council of Representatives approved the Australian plan, as amended by the US, for an investigation of Communist intervention in Laos by the SEATO-nation Ambassadors to Laos (see item 1 February). The US amendment provided that the investigation take place only at the invitation of the Laotian Government and was adopted to meet the objections of Ambassador Brown, who feared that a SEATO investigation might side-track the RLG from proceeding with the NNC proposal. A requirement that the Laotian Government initiate action would, according to Brown, make the investigation less likely.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1460 and 1461, and (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1535, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US policy with regard to Chinese Nationalist irregulars in Laos (see item 3 February) was to obtain the withdrawal to Taiwan of those still under the control of the Nationalist Government and to resettle the remainder in small groups in Laos and Thailand. To further this policy,

the Secretary directed the Ambassador to urge the RLG to make clear to the Nationalist Government its displeasure over the presence of the irregulars in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 878, 16 Feb 61.

17 Feb

Australian Prime Minister Menzies informed the US Ambassador that the NNC concept was "imaginative and constructive" and that his government would give it full support. However, he posed the same three questions that his Secretary of External Affairs had raised in a discussion with the Ambassador two days earlier.

According to the US Ambassador these points were as follows: 1) the Australians were doubtful whether the neutrals involved, particularly Sihanouk, would accept the invitation since it presupposed acceptance of the Boun Oum government. Further, they believed that the neutrals, before undertaking the proposed task would insist on some broadening of the RLG, or at least some assurance that the Boun Oum government was not to be regarded as immutable; 2) the Australians had pointed out that the three neutrals involved were all small and relatively insignificant countries, and had questioned the caliber of the commissioners the neutrals could provide in relation to the magnitude of the tasks confronting them; 3) and finally, the Australian Government had stated that much of the success of the plan depended upon the attitude of the Communist Bloc.

The US Ambassador also reported that the Secretary of External Affairs, expressing surprise at the choice of Sihanouk as the central figure in the plan, had questioned whether he was sufficiently responsible and reliable for the task.

(S) Msg, SecState to Canberra, 455, 18 Feb 61; (S) Msg, Canberra to SecState, 482, 15 Feb 61.

17 Feb

The New Zealand Government stated that it agreed with the NNC concept and would give it full support. However, the New Zealand Minister in stating the position of his Government to the Department of State made the following comments:

1) Burma and Cambodia might not accept membership on the commission unless a prior big power agreement was secured, and Cambodia especially might insist on a 14-nation meeting. It might be necessary, therefore, to accept a conference, if to do so would remove the only "stumbling block" in the way of the success of the plan.

2) The New Zealand Government had reservations about the Commission membership and considered it might be advantageous to include India.

3) The RLG should be broadened.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs informed the Minister that the US would be reluctant to agree to an international conference even if refusal to agree were the only obstacle to the success of the NNC plan. Turning to the question of the Commission's membership, the Deputy Assistant Secretary said that India's association with the ICC and its attitude toward the RLG almost precluded its being a member of the NNC. In conclusion, Mr. Steeves pointed out that everyone agreed

on broadening the RLG, and he told the New Zealand Minister that Phoumi was planning to offer Souvanna a post as Laotian Foreign Minister.

(S) Msg, SecState to Wellington, 332, 17 Feb 61.

17 Feb

The US proposed to the British that the UK make the first presentation of the NNC plan (see item 10 February) to the Soviet Government. In making this proposal to the British Ambassador to the US, Assistant Secretary Parsons stated that the US Government had decided against a joint demarche with Britain and France because it would look too much like a "white man's club."

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1229, 17 Feb 61.

18 Feb

The British Ambassador to the US informed Assistant Secretary Parsons that, unless the Soviets gave their reply on the ICC before 20 February, the British Government preferred that the US rather than the UK contact the Soviets first in support of the Neutral Nations Commission proposal. The US agreed and informed the British Ambassador that the NNC proposal would be presented to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington on 20 February.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular Unnumbered, 18 Feb 61.

18 Feb

[REDACTED]

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos DA IN 86152, 18 Feb 61

18 Feb

CINCPAC drew the attention of the CHJUSMAG, Thailand, and CHPEO, Laos, to the part of the NNC proposal (see items 2, 10 February) that "contained the thought that Lao training could be conducted primarily [REDACTED] In CINCPAC's opinion, this idea was put forth by the "State Department Planners" either "in the context of their latest political plan which would eventually neutralize Laos and remove PEO from the scene," [REDACTED]

CINCPAC directed the addressees to make the following assumptions:

1. That a full-scale MAAG would not be authorized for Laos but that the PEO operation would continue.

2. That, in order to insure future political stability in Laos, US military objectives continued to be to aid the FAL in maintaining internal security, to conduct delaying operations against external aggression, and to prevent seizure of Laos by the Communists.

Having made these assumptions, the addressees were requested to comment on how training of the FAL should be conducted in the future (see item 23 February).

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to Chiefs JUSMAG Thailand and PEO Laos, 182010Z Feb 61.

18 Feb

The Commonwealth Secretary in New Delhi asked the following four questions in regard to the NNC, Ambassador Bunker

informed the Secretary of State:

1) Who was going to determine what arms importations were "legal?"

2) Would Souvanna be asked to join the RLG?

3) How were "the others" to be brought into support of the plan?

4) Would Sihanouk be informed in advance of King Vathana's declaration?

The US Ambassador said he had not answered these questions in exact detail for he wished to avoid as much as possible the GOI's "ever-ready suspicion of US dictating Lao policy."

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1758, 19 Feb 61.

18 Feb

The Soviet Government informed the British Ambassador in Moscow that it favored an international conference on Laos to provide a new basis on which the ICC could function. As reported to the Department of State by the British Embassy in Washington, the Soviet position was that changed conditions since the Geneva Conference of 1954 called for a new international gathering; either of the type called for by Sihanouk (see item 1 January) or like the Geneva Conference.

According to the British Embassy, the Soviet Government gave the British Ambassador in Moscow two draft messages. The first message was an invitation from the Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference (Great Britain and the USSR) to the US, Canada, Burma, Thailand, and South Vietnam calling for an international conference to give the ICC new instructions. The second draft message was from the Co-chairmen to Nehru asking him to convene the ICC in New Delhi or some other convenient place where it would consider what further powers it would require to perform its assigned functions effectively.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1241, 19 Feb 61.

18 Feb

Souvanna Phouma reacted favorably to the presentation of the NNC concept by UK Ambassador Garner in Cambodia; however, Souvanna appeared "deaf" to British urging that he take part in a broadened Boun Oum government (see item 16 February). The US Ambassador to Cambodia, in reporting on the Souvanna-Garner conversation to the Secretary of State, said that Souvanna also indicated that he still favored a national union government with PL participation, but he stated that a "non political" one headed by the King would be acceptable. He envisaged the latter arrangement as an interim measure until new elections could be held, perhaps in three to four months.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1056, 18 Feb 61.

19 Feb

King Savang appealed to the peoples of the world to respect the neutrality of Laos and invited the governments of Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to form a Neutral Nations Commission with the mission of "denouncing all foreign intervention . . . which would result in imperiling of the kingdom's independence integrity and neutrality."

The King's speech followed closely the content of the draft provided him by the US (see item 10 February)



except that it did not invite Sihanouk to head the Neutral Nations Commission.

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that he had been told by the Laotian Foreign Minister that, while the King favored a reorganized government, Phoumi and others opposed it for fear they would lose their jobs as ministers.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1553, 18 Feb 61, and 1561, 19 Feb 61.

19 Feb CINCPAC approved a recommendation of the CHPEO [redacted] assume responsibility for support of all Meo guerrilla forces (see item 21 February). These forces, according to CHPEO, consisted of 2,000 Meo and some additional tribesmen. MAP support had been given the authorized 2,000 for initial issue of equipment. [redacted] with few exceptions, provided resupply for this group and all supply for the guerrillas in excess of the authorized 2,000.

(S) Msgs, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 86158, and CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 86161, both 19 Feb 61.

20 Feb The Secretary of State called in the Soviet Ambassador and told him that the US Government hoped the USSR would permit the Laotian Government and Neutral powers of South-east Asia to "work out [a] solution which will minimize controversy and permit prompt implementation" in Laos. The Secretary said that the new US Administration wished to see Laos "independent, a genuine neutral unaligned in its international relations but free to exercise its sovereign right to manage its own affairs and to provide for its national integrity." The US Government was, therefore, prepared to cooperate fully to help carry out the proposals of the King of Laos for neutralizing his country (see items 17, 18 February), and it hoped the Soviet Union would do the same.

In response to the Soviet proposal for an international conference to work out a settlement of the Lao situation (see item 18 February), the Secretary said that the US was opposed because such a conference would be "public and stimulate debate and would not be as conducive to [a] settlement as [a] quieter approach." (See item 28 February for the Soviet reply.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1265, 22 Feb 61.

20 Feb Vietnamese Foreign Minister Mau declared that the NNC was a good approach to the peaceful settlement of the Laotian problem. It would be difficult, he told US Ambassador Durbrow, for the Communists to continue an airlift and other aid to Laos if a NNC could confirm the facts.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister was also pleased that King Savang had made such a firm appeal. He was convinced that all important Laotian leaders, having failed to work out a solution themselves, were now looking to the King for guidance. But Mau was not certain whether Souvanna would accept a position in the Boun Oum regime. In his opinion it was imperative that Souvanna be included in the government as a Cabinet member, but not as Premier.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister agreed with Ambassador Durbrow that basically Sihanouk feared the Communists, and

he tended to concur that the Burmese had the same attitude. Although Mau initially questioned why India was not a member of the NNC, he subsequently agreed that the RLG as well as other western powers might not desire Indian participation in view of India's record on the ICC in Laos and Vietnam.

In conclusion, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister declared that it was important for all Southeast Asian countries to work together to prevent the Communists from taking over in Laos. If they were successful there, he said, they would try the same tactics in other countries.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1385, 20 Feb 61.

20 Feb

The Philippine Government, in an aide-memoire given to the US Ambassador in Manila, said that the neutralization of Laos under the NNC held the promise of a feasible peaceful solution. However, the government had certain misgivings regarding the US proposal. An NNC constituted only on the invitation of the RLG, the note said, would be impotent to deal with non-compliance from within or without. In addition, the permanence of Laotian neutrality rested on such undependable factors as the reaction of the USSR, the likelihood of a Viet Minh agreement, and the inclusion of Souvanna and the PL in the government.

The Philippine Government also believed that the use of neutral nations such as Burma and Cambodia in the NNC would give respectability to the theory of neutralism, which could demoralize US allies in Asia.

The Philippine note suggested that the neutralization of Laos could be accomplished more directly and effectively by a United Nations Commission. The aide-memoire further noted that the NNC was outside the SEATO context, thereby diminishing SEATO influence. This loss of influence could be avoided by using a UN Commission, which would function in the same manner as the NNC but have the advantage of being a neutral body under higher authority than SEATO.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 939, 20 Feb 61.

20 Feb

The Malayan Prime Minister declared that his country would be willing to be a member of the NNC (see item 10 February) reported the US Ambassador to the Secretary of State. He doubted, however, that the Communists would find a solidly anti-Communist Malaya acceptable as a member of the NNC, particularly when his government had just recently furnished arms to Vietnam to fight the Communists there.

(S) Msg, Kuala Lumpur to SecState, unnumbered [Control 11926], 20 Feb 61.

21 Feb

The Secretary of State informed the US diplomatic posts in countries concerned with the Laos crisis of the principal reservations expressed by governments consulted on the NNC proposal. He listed the Department responses thereto, to be used in discussions of the Neutral Nations Commission with the host governments:

1. Adequacy of neutral nations' resources to ensure the neutral status of Laos. The Department of State believed that the neutral nations had sufficient trained personnel to maintain adequate supervisory machinery. Technical and administrative assistance might be provided the commission by the UN Secretary General if necessary.

2. Necessity to broaden the Laotian Government. The Department recognized that the Laotian Government should be broadened to represent all non-Communist elements but should not include the Pathet Lao. The King's declaration of neutrality (see item 19 February) and Phoumi's plan to offer Souvanna a government post should attract broader domestic and international support for the present government.

3. Desirability of an international conference prior to establishment of the Neutral Nations Commission to set terms of reference for it. The Department believed that recent Chinese Communist criticism of the new US Administration, as well as Soviet behavior in the Congo and the UN General Assembly, indicated that a large conference would only "exacerbate international tensions over Laos rather than reduce them."

4. Desirability of obtaining Soviet approval of the NNC plan prior to its implementation. The Department believed that the Soviets would probably have rejected the proposal if it had been presented to them prior to implementation and would have insisted on an international conference. Soviet rejection of the Neutral Nations Commission, once it was launched, would clearly put the onus of failure on them.

5. The difficulty of determining which military aid agreements were legal. The Department believed the Neutral Nations Commission would make its determinations on the basis of the King's announcement of 19 February (see item). Despite doubts that the existing government was not fully representative of the Lao people, Communist aid to the Pathet Lao could hardly be "defined as pursuant to international agreement," even by the most skeptical neutrals.

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular, 1258, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb

[REDACTED] React-  
ing to CINCPAC's authorization to the CHPEO (see item 19 February), the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) pointed out to CINCPAC that support of the original 2,000 Meo had already been authorized as part of 29,800 men in the auto-defense forces to be supported by DOD funds.

[REDACTED]  
(S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, Def 990855, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb

In an interview with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi discussed 1) his ideas for broadening the Lao Government and 2) his attempt to obtain an interview with Sihanouk. With regard to 1), Phoumi stated his intention to offer Souvanna either the Deputy Premiership, the Ministry of Public Works, or the Foreign Ministry, and to broaden the Government to include other prominent political leaders. A major difficulty, according to Phoumi, would be finding a premier of sufficient stature to "ride herd on such diverse 'hautes personalities' as Boun Oum, Phoui, and Souvanna." Phoumi claimed that he had suggested to the King that His Majesty head such a Government, but the King had refused on political grounds. With regard to 2), Phoumi stated

that Sihanouk had said he would be too busy for an official visit until April but would not object to an earlier private visit.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1578, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the RLG was fully aware of the dangers created by the presence of Chinese Nationalist irregulars in Laos. Four to five hundred of them had been recruited for the FAL, but only from among Chinese irregulars who had lived in Laos "a long time" (see item 16 February).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1577, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that the Cambodian Government had declared that it would be unable to participate in the NNC. Cambodia declined for the following reasons:

1 The unilaterally proposed commission would not be able to verify all foreign interference without agreement of the authorities in control of the eastern provinces of Laos.

2 The Cambodian Government believed that a Commission could be set up only after an international conference, as proposed by Sihanouk, had been able to lead the great powers into renouncing any interference into Laotian internal affairs.

3 A definitive settlement of the Laotian problem could not be obtained until the Laotian people had a complete international guarantee that they would be allowed fully to select a government of their own choice.

(Two days later the Cambodian Information Ministry Daily News Bulletin published Cambodia's official refusal to serve on the Commission.)

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1068, 21 Feb 61;

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState 1079, 23 Feb 61.

22 Feb The Secretary of State suggested that the US Ambassador urge the Laotian Government to defer any reaction to and, above all, avoid any public mention of, the reported Cambodian refusal to participate in the NNC (see item 21 February). A change in Sihanouk's position, said the Secretary, would be "far less unlikely" if the initial refusal were not made public.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1271, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb The US Ambassador to Japan reported to the Secretary of State that, according to a Japanese official, the US proposal for a NNC (see item 10 February) had made a "good impression" in the Foreign Office." Continuing, however, the official had stated that the Japanese Foreign Office considered the following three points important:

1. The fact that Boun Oum's government was the only legal one in Laos should not be stressed too much, because it was important to "bring back Souvanna and associate him [with the] present RLG." To give too much importance to Boun Oum would make the return of Souvanna more difficult.

2. The ability of the NNC to control effectively the shipment of arms to Laos was the most critical feature of

the NNC plan. Since the US did not propose to stop arms shipments until the NNC was able to prevent the Communists from doing so, it was doubtful that the Pathet Lao would deprive themselves of Communist aid until arms shipments to the RLG had stopped.

3. A long-term policy should be developed and implemented for Laos going "beyond the tactical solution of present state of hostilities," and providing a "broader basis for governmental stability and strong recognition by all concerned of advantages of Lao neutrality."

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2391, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb The JCS informed CINCPAC that his objections to US support for two additional Thai RCTs (see item 15 February) had prompted an investigation to determine whether the "decision" of 23 January (see item) was "intended to be permissive rather than directive."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990721, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi charged that the US support for King Savang's proposal for a neutral Laos marked "the start of [a] new US scheme [to] bury [the] Geneva Agreements and use [the] prestige of neutral countries to legalize [the] rebel clique in Laos." The "sole correct way" to solution of the Laos problem according to Chen Yi, lay in an enlarged Geneva Conference as proposed by Sihanouk (see item 12 December 1960), reactivation of the ICC, and recognition of the Souvanna Government. Chen Yi's remarks were made at a diplomatic reception in Peking and were reported by the US Consul General in Hong Kong to the Secretary of State.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1420, 24 Feb 61.

23 Feb Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko denounced the NNC proposal (see item 10 February) and insisted that the solution to the Laotian problem lay in adherence to established agreement and procedures--such as the Geneva Agreement and the ICC. The US Minister in Moscow reported to Secretary Rusk that Gromyko (in conversation with British Ambassador Roberts) had acknowledged that King Savang Vathana's declaration, which he called a US proposal on the NNC was considered by the Soviets to show an improvement in the US attitude on the Laotian problem. But he declared that the new proposal was the US way of getting around the Geneva agreement and procedures. Also Gromyko viewed the proposal as a US attempt to exclude Poland.

In response to Roberts' remarks on the disadvantages of a public airing of controversy in a new conference, Gromyko said the situation was serious and must be discussed among responsible powers.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1993, 23 Feb 61.

23 Feb In response to a request from CINCPAC for comments on the future conduct of the training of the FAL (see item 18 February), CHPEO stated that, provided certain conditions were satisfied to make possible effective supervision, a Neutral Nations Commission would not jeopardize the operations of the PEO. These conditions were as follows:

1. Any agreement for a neutral Laos should provide for a Laotian internal security force of fixed composition and strength.

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2. The RLG should have the right to request a foreign military training mission of a size agreed upon in advance. All other foreign military bases and troops should be prohibited.

3. All training should take place on Laotian soil to avoid the appearance of trying to deceive the Neutral Nations Commission.

(S) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC, DA IN 87292, 23 Feb 61.

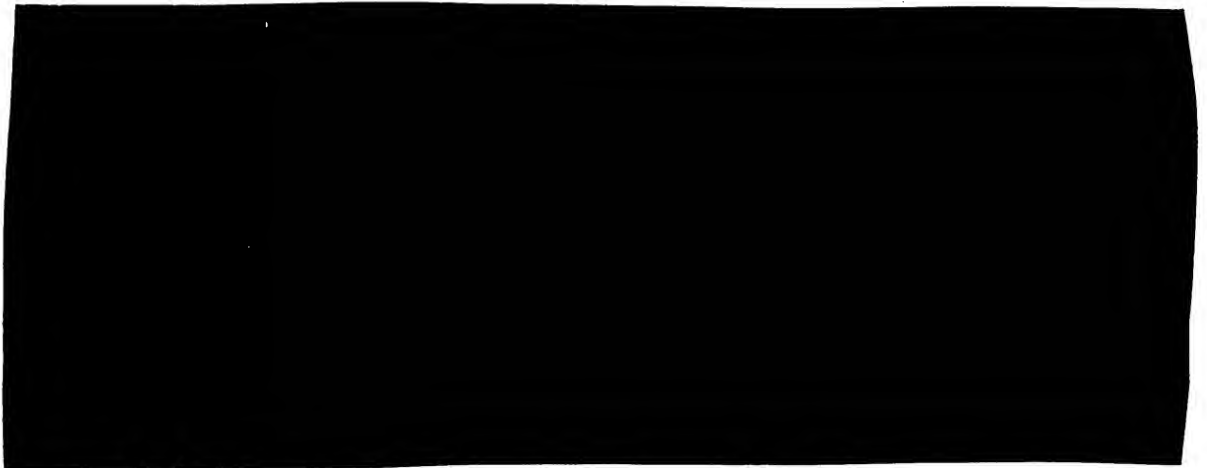
23 Feb CHPEO advised CINCPAC that Air America was not able to operate the 20 additional helicopters approved for commitment to Laos (see item 26 January). In CHPEO's opinion, so large a requirement could best be met by employing a complete sanitized US unit.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 87244 23 Feb 61.

23 Feb A Pravda article stated that the legal government of Laos, recognized as such by the Lao people and "an international scheme" was that headed by Souvanna Phouma.

(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2001, 23 Feb 61.

24 Feb



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC DA IN 92201  
24 Feb 61. --

24 Feb Vietnamese Secretary of State Thuan declared that since King Savang Vathana had put forth a good proposal for dealing with the Laos problem, he saw no reason to abandon it just because Cambodia had declined to participate. Reporting this statement to US Secretary of State the US Counselor of Mission in Saigon stated that Thuan had agreed with the US view that if another country should be needed to replace Cambodia, Tunisia would be a good candidate. It could be pointed out that Tunisia had served on a UN committee to conduct an investigation in Laos in 1959.

(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1400, 25 Feb 61.

24 Feb In the belief that the existing composition of the Laotian Government was the key obstacle to realization of the Neutral Nations Commission plan, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to continue to "press energetically" for a broadened regime. The Secretary requested further comments on two approaches to a broadened Laotian Government: 1) Phoumi's concept of a cabinet of former premiers and deputy premiers; and 2) a government headed by some other prominent and generally respected Laotian such as Kou Abhay (see item 27 February).

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1288, 24 Feb 61.

25 Feb Premier U Nu announced that Burma would not participate in the NNC, since such participation would imply Burma's

recognition of the Boun Oum Government. Cambodia's proposal for a 14-nation conference also was not acceptable to Burma.

U Nu declared that Burma wanted the people of Laos to choose their own government. In order to achieve this, he said, the following three steps were necessary: 1) the big powers of both the East and West must take their hands off Laos; 2) the major political parties in Laos must accept the principle of a free and fair general election; and 3) a commission of neutral nations must be formed to supervise the elections.

Burma would be ready to serve on such a commission, U Nu added, if it were the desire of all concerned.

(OUO) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 637, 25 Feb 61; NYT, 26 Mar 61, 16.

25 Feb SEATO's Secretary General Pote Sarasin endorsed King Savang Vathana's call for a NNC as the "best solution for Laos," and one "which will permit Laos to have [a] chance to develop," reported Ambassador Johnson to the Secretary of State.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1505, 25 Feb 61.

26 Feb CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the following measures be taken to provide additional air support needed to recapture the Plaine des Jarres:

1. Supply additional airlift through CAT or other means.

2. [REDACTED] B-26 aircraft to attack enemy convoys and supply dumps in the Plaine des Jarres area.

3. Encourage Lao pilots to use their T-6 aircraft for bombing.

4. Pursue further the use of AD-6 aircraft piloted by Vietnamese volunteers.

5. Recruit US volunteers to fly AD-6 aircraft, thereby, providing a means for successfully combatting any Communist prop fighters operating in the Plaine des Jarres area.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 262255Z, 26 Feb 61.

26 Feb Phoumi advised Ambassador Brown that the RLG had decided to ask the Nationalist Chinese Government to remove all its irregulars from Laos except those accustomed to living there and not under direct orders of the Nationalist Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1602, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that, in a discussion regarding Burmese and Cambodian refusals to accept the NNC concept, the Thai Foreign Minister had indicated that he agreed the US should seek to bring pressure on Rangoon and Phnom Penh to meet the US point of view. This course was preferable to giving up the NNC proposal and "doing anything" that might be interpreted as a US unilateral move to meet the Communist viewpoint.

Consideration should also be given according to the Foreign Ministry to the possibility of selecting two other



countries to serve on the NNC. He suggested Japan and Tunisia.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1513, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb

In response to the Secretary of State's instructions to press for a broadened RLG (see item 24 February) Ambassador Brown stated that, although the composition of the RLG had been an obstacle to the success of the NNC plan, the more fundamental difficulties had been the Communist refusal to accept the concept of the NNC, and the existence of a rival "government." The Ambassador agreed, however, that the RLG needed more personal ability and prestige and a wider representative character if it was to govern effectively and pursue a probably arduous and prolonged military effort.

To make the RLG more representative, Ambassador Brown proposed a government composed of all former premiers and deputy premiers. Phoumi would be retained as Minister of Defense for this government, and several key personages with "special characteristics," such as family and tribal influence, would also participate. The Ambassador felt that the disadvantages of the King heading such a government outweighed the advantages. Therefore, Brown concluded, unless Boun Oum was considered too great a liability, he should remain as the Prime Minister. Khou Abhay was too aged and feeble to head a government, and there were, in Ambassador Brown's view, no other "prominent and generally respected Lao" available.

The Ambassador was also of the opinion that a way should be left open for Souvanna to enter the Government on honorable terms in spite of his recent statements at Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang that he would never compromise with Boun Oum or Phoumi.

The Ambassador saw "merit" in the opinion of former premier Sananikone that there should be a new government, not merely a reorganization of the existing one. Not only would formation of a new government be a dramatic act, but it would, according to Brown, eliminate the "taint of illegality" attached to the present one.

The question of fundamental importance in a governmental reorganization, according to the Ambassador, was the probable effect on the RLG military effort. In the Ambassador's opinion, a "more comprehensive and respectable government should appeal even more to [the] officer corps" than the present one.

Finally, the Ambassador cautioned that the present RLG was a "one man (Phoumi) government," and that, so long as Phoumi spent most of his time in "mending his political fences," the war effort would suffer. The Ambassador recommended that Phoumi "be told in unmistakable terms that . . . his primary effort must be directed toward retaking the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres area, in order to be able [to] negotiate from . . . strength."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1591, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb

Souvanna Phouma was described by a close associate as "bitter, determined, farther left in [his] views" and "bent on [a] showdown with [the] King." In a conversation with Ambassador Brown, this associate, who had been with Souvanna



in Phnom Penh since December, reported that the former premier still believed he had broad popular support and could control the Pathet Lao. Despite recent declarations to the contrary, Souvanna would still be willing to come back as premier of a coalition government excluding extremists or as deputy premier in a transition government under Khou Abhay.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1598, 27 Feb 61.

28 Feb

The Soviet Union rejected the NNC plan (see item 20 February) and proposed instead an international conference to 1) consider measures to "normalize" the situation in Laos, and 2) issue new terms of reference for the ICC. The Soviet position, as given to the Secretary of State by the Soviet Ambassador, was that the US, by supporting the NNC idea, was proposing to abandon the Geneva Agreement and replace it with a new commission for which there was no legal basis. The Geneva Agreement was still in force and provided the legal basis for its instrument, the ICC. However, because of changes in the situation, the Geneva Agreement on Laos was no longer adequate. For this reason, a new conference was necessary to provide additional powers for the ICC.

(C) Msg, SecState, Circular 1302, 28 Feb 61.

1-2  
Mar

The US Ambassador to Cambodia reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had returned to Phnom Penh after a nine-day trip to Hanoi and Xieng Khouang.

According to an official Cambodian Government press release, Souvanna claimed that his "government" controlled three-fourths of Laos, namely the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, a great part of Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang, and part of the south. Souvanna admitted that his "government" was receiving aid from Communist countries. But without it, he declared, "we would be crushed due to [the] enormous aid that our adversaries [are] receiving from [the] US, Thailand, Taiwan, and SVN."

The following day Ambassador Trimble, in a message to the Secretary of State, reported Michael Field's comments regarding the trip to Xieng Khouang. (Field, a London Telegraph correspondent, had accompanied Souvanna on his trip.) He told Trimble that the Russians he had met had been most vehement in insisting that the USSR would not permit Laos to become a pro-West neutral. Field was strongly convinced that the Bloc attached the greatest importance to the convening of a 14-nation conference. In response to Trimble's question as to why the RLG proposals had not met alleged USSR objectives, Field emphasized that their emanation from the Boun Oum Government had made them "highly suspect" to the Bloc.

(OUO) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1108, 1 Mar 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1121, 3 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1116, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar

The CHPEO informed CINCPAC that he had again emphasized to Phoumi the US concern over Phoumi's formation of six additional special FAL battalions (see item 6 February). Phoumi claimed that these units were only temporary and would be phased out when the four new infantry battalions (see item 6 February) became operational. He "fallaciously" pointed out, according to CHPEO, that the Laotian Government had not asked for US support for the six battalions because they were being equipped with arms taken from Auto-Defense units. Pay, said Phoumi, was being provided from other than FAL sources.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 89202, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the Chairman, JCS, that the Department of State had agreed, if necessary, to conduct negotiations with the French Government for continued training of the FAL by the US (see item 9 February).

(TS) Memo, Asst SecDef (ISA) to CJCS, Laotian Training Advisory and Assistance Group Activities in Laos (C), 9 Mar 61, 1st N/H of JCS 1992/923.

2 Mar

The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek negotiation by the US of a formal agreement in principle with Pakistan to provide US lift and support for a Pakistani force "package" to be employed in Laos if necessary. The Pakistani Government had committed such a force consisting of a brigade group, a fighter squadron, and a destroyer for SEATO Plan 5/60 (Combatting Communist Insurgency in Laos), and it had been earmarked as part of the SEATO General Reserve Force. However, said the JCS, the demonstrated reluctance of several member nations to support "meaningful" SEATO assistance to Laos raised the possibility that the US might have to commit a force unilaterally or join a multilateral force drawn from only some of the SEATO powers to

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prevent Laos from falling to the Communists. Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines were the SEATO powers most likely to join the US in such an effort.

(TS) JCS 1992/918, US Lift and Logistic Support for Pakistani Forces Committed to SEATO Plan 5/60 (C), 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar In reply to Ambassador Brown's recommendations of 27 February (see item), the Secretary of State said he concurred in general with the Ambassador's excellent analysis and recommendations but had the following comments:

1. He agreed that a government composed of former Premiers and Deputy Premiers offered an advantage, but the addition of figures chosen for special characteristics might make the government subject to attack as a hand-picked pro-West group.

2. Although the Secretary accepted the validity of Brown's arguments against the King heading such a government, he commented that ultimately it might be the best way to resolve the political problem along lines that would be satisfactory to the United States.

3. He recognized the difficulty in dropping Boun Oum from a reorganized government but considered that if he remained as Premier, the new government would be an easy target as "new Boun Oum government." The Secretary of State agreed that Khou Abhay was unsuitable for the premiership, and suggested the name of Prince Khamphan who, though weak, would give the government royal cachet.

4. He agreed that the door should be left open for Souvanna but did not consider that the effort to bring about a new government should hinge on his inclusion. The "posture," he declared, should be increasingly to force Souvanna into a position where he would "clearly bear the onus" for not working with a representative and respected government and where his strength clearly depended on Communist support.

5. Although he agreed it was necessary that Phoumi devote more attention to the war effort, Secretary Rusk believed, nevertheless, that the Laotian General needed to bring about a change of government. Rusk thought it would be best, therefore, to urge Phoumi to form a new RLG to that he could then devote his full attention to pushing the war against the PL, especially in the Plaine des Jarres.

6. The Secretary concurred in the proposed policy for the RLG but suggested that Brown consider recommending that in liberated areas the RLG should carry out a publicized policy of granting amnesty to former PL adherents and integrating them into the national community. This, concluded the Secretary, would serve as an example to those still in rebellion.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1323, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar US Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that, according to the Burmese Ambassador to Cambodia, Souvanna had stated that he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a 14-nation conference. Souvanna felt that if agreement could be reached on holding such a meeting, the issue of a "legal government" could be resolved by the King appointing a "caretaker" government composed of civil servants and technicians.

Souvanna also had stated that the conference should concentrate on the following three principal tasks: 1) an immediate cease-fire; 2) determination and elimination of foreign interference; and 3) creation of a commission to supervise free elections in Laos which would provide the basis for forming a new representative government.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1126, 3 Mar 61.

3 Mar

A French Embassy officer informed the Secretary of State of a conversation between the French Ambassador to Cambodia and Souvanna. The Laotian was alleged to have said that he was convinced that the Communists could still be prevented from dominating the situation but time was growing short. He also said that Souphanouvong agreed with him that Laos should follow a Cambodian-type socialism. According to Souvanna, this would not be a serious danger to Western positions, to which he remained "very attached."

Souvanna had seen Pham Van Dong, North Vietnamese Premier, and Giap in Hanoi, and they had told him that their Government would be "content" to see the re-establishment of true neutrality in Laos. The Bloc's strong reaction against the US, Souvanna reported, was the result of information they had received that the US had surveyed Plateau du Traninh to set up rocket launching sites.

(Secretary Rusk passed this information to Ambassador Brown on 6 March.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 934, 6 Mar 61.

3 Mar

Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that, in addition to clarifying the US position on the Laotian King's proposal for an NNC (as set forth in the Secretary of State's message of 14 February - see item), he had informed Cambodia's First Minister of US concern that the Bloc "would" merely use the 14-Nation Conference as a propaganda forum. This would increase rather than decrease international tension, he said.

Ambassador Trimble, also reported that he had explained the US attitude on a reorganization of the RLG. The US favored a RLG with a broadened base to include all representative elements. Naturally such a government would include Souvanna. The King must be the point of departure in forming such a government since he was the only one who could count on the support of the Laotian population. Trimble then added that the US was against Communist representation in the government itself, but not against legally-elected NLHX members being seated in the National Assembly.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1124, 3 Mar 61.

3 Mar

In a letter to President de Gaulle Prince Sihanouk expressed the belief that had the proposal to re-activate the ICC been quickly implemented it would have offered "certain possibilities" of restoring peace in Laos. But, unfortunately, opposition to this plan deprived it of the "possibility of bringing about a cease-fire and [an] end to foreign interference."

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The most recent proposal to create a "'Commission of Experts in Foreign Interference'" [the NNC], the Prince declared, was also destined to fail, despite strong US support. Because of the existence of two de facto governments in Laos, the Cambodian Government was "obliged decline to accept proposal which because of its unilateral character alone unable have concrete results." Therefore, Prince Sihanouk concluded, a conference of countries most interested in Laotian problems was becoming increasingly urgent, "while precarious balance of forces can be maintained."

(Sihanouk's letter to de Gaulle was made public by the French Government on 27 March, and on 28 March Ambassador Gavin reported its contents to the Secretary of State.)

(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4068, 28 Mar 61.

3 Mar According to the New York Times, US Ambassador Thompson said that during a talk with Foreign Minister Gromyko he had requested a meeting with Premier Khrushchev to give him a message from President Kennedy. The message was reported to express hope for an improvement of Soviet-United States relations, and to include President Kennedy's views on the situation in Laos.

(U) NYT, 4 Mar 61, 1.

3 Mar At a White House meeting the President instructed the Chairman, JCS, to prepare a plan for recapture of the Plaine des Jarres (see item 9 March) and to recall CINCPAC, CHPEO, and one officer of the PEO staff to Washington for consultations.

(S) Memo for Record, Admin Asst to CJCS, 3 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2) 1 Mar 61; (S) Memo, CJCS to JCS, 6 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

4 Mar Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that a British Embassy official had reported highlights of a conversation between Phoumi and the British Ambassador to Laos. The Laotian General, Secretary Rusk said, had expressed a desire to visit Phnom Penh. Phoumi particularly desired to explain to the Cambodian Government that King Savang's proposal for a NNC had been conceived essentially to prepare for an international conference of the type proposed by Sihanouk.

In addition, Phoumi had pointed out to the British Ambassador that the internal and international aspects of the Laotian situation were now so interconnected that a domestic settlement could no longer be sought independently from an international agreement; a conference therefore was necessary.

The British Ambassador in Laos had been non-committal on the conference idea. But, Secretary Rusk said, the British diplomat had encouraged Phoumi to meet with Souvanna.

The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that he considered it most undesirable for Phoumi to take the line he had proposed in advocating an international conference. "You should explain this to Phoumi," the Secretary continued, "and be sure he understands [the]

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 929, 4 Mar 61.

The British Foreign Office informed the US that in the UK Government's reply to the USSR draft proposals (see item 18 February) the British planned to tell the Soviets that they were willing to accept the Russian draft letter to Nehru, calling for a revival of the ICC. The British said that they would also state that they were not yet prepared to express any additional views concerning a conference until the USSR had given its own further views on: 1) Laotian representation at the conference; 2) the kind of settlement that might come out of the meeting; and, 3) how to insure that discussions would be constructive, and "not just a propaganda exercise."

The British Counselor of Mission in Washington, in discussing the proposal with Secretary Rusk, said that his government saw no harm in sounding out the Soviets and giving them a reply. In addition, the British did see an advantage in getting the ICC into action in New Delhi.

Furthermore, the British believed that the military situation in Laos was much too dangerous for the West to just sit around and wait for events, and they feared that there was a serious risk that the Communists might try to push toward an international conference by unleashing further significant military action in Laos.

The Secretary of State instructed US Ambassador Thompson in Moscow that in his forthcoming discussion with Khrushchev, he should refer to the Secretary's meeting with the Soviet Ambassador on 28 February (see item), and bring out the following points:

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go with issues unresolved and the purposes of the conference undefined, could be source of increased tensions. The net result might well be that a political settlement having failed, the situation would become a military issue.

2. In order to seek a common ground for a political settlement of the Laotian problem the US wanted to make its position "crystal clear." The United States believed there was a potentially highly dangerous situation in Laos. The US flatly rejected the Soviet statement that this situation had been brought about by US military support of the RLG. This support had not been nor was it even intended to be used to threaten any of Laos' neighbors, and the present US arms delivery to the RLG was no more than it had been during the past five years. However, recently, there had been a massive Soviet airlift of arms and ammunitions to the PL forces in the eastern provinces, and the presence of Viet Minh technicians was widely known. This build-up of PL forces supported by the Viet Minh could only lead to an ascending state of conflict. The US wanted to avoid such a consequence and hoped that the USSR also wanted to do the same.

3. The United States considered that recognition of Souvanna's "government" as a legitimate one was untenable both in fact and in law. The US therefore "must conclude that Soviet support of Souvanna Government is power play to push Communist cause in Laos."

4. The United States was prepared, as a token of good faith, to have its military assistance to Laos screened by a Neutral Nations Commission and to examine the possibility of channeling all economic aid through some appropriate international mechanism.

5. The United States believed sincerely that a common basis of understanding could still be found and would appreciate a more detailed statement of what the Soviets might consider an acceptable basis of settlement.

(S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1439, 6 Mar 61.

5 Mar

The Secretary of State advised Ambassador Trimble that he should present to Souvanna as soon as possible the US policy for a neutral Laos (see item 14 February). In addition to recommending that he follow the line of argumentation he had used with the Cambodian First Minister (see item 3 March), the Secretary of State also gave the Ambassador the following guidance:

1) The genuine desire of "this administration" to bring about a neutral Laos, fulfilling many of the objectives for which Prince Souvanna had allegedly been working, should be impressed upon Souvanna. The unique opportunity to play a truly patriotic role in responding to the invitation to return to Laos and participate in the process of broadening the government and unifying all elements willing to cooperate for the salvation of his country should be pointed out to Souvanna. Further, it would be appropriate to remind him that US future plans for Laos envisaged a continuation of very substantial economic aid.



2) Souvanna should be warned that to follow the line he was reported to have enunciated in PL headquarters of encouraging Communist and PL forces to attack the established government of Laos was fraught with the utmost danger. It could only result in bloodshed and unnecessary hardship. The US was willing to exert considerable effort to achieve a satisfactory situation in Laos through some device such as the NNC. At the same time, however, Souvanna could be left in no doubt as to US determination to thwart the purposes of the Communist forces that were threatening the security of Laos and Southeast Asia.

(S) Msg, SecState, to Phnom Penh, 774 and to Vientiane 930, 5 Mar 61.

6 Mar

Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State that he had carried out the instructions contained in the Secretary's 5 March message (see item). The discussion with Souvanna had brought out the following "highlights":

1. Souvanna had asserted that only he could save Laos; that 90% of the country was behind him and his policy of neutrality. Given the choice, the Lao would choose him rather than the Phoumi/Boun Oum group or the Pathet Lao. What was required in Laos, Souvanna had declared, was a national union government composed of all three of these elements.

2. As an immediate step, Souvanna had expressed strong support for the dissolution, by the King, of the Boun Oum Government (Souvanna said he would never serve in an enlarged Boun Oum Government), and the creation of an apolitical government at which time he [Souvanna] would submit his own resignation. This government could be presided over by the King himself with a First Minister, or the King could designate the President of the King's Council as Prime Minister. It would be composed of civil servants, ambassadors, etc., who would prepare for general elections. Elections, Souvanna had continued, should be supervised by an international commission, and the countryside disarmed, except for the police. The outcome of these elections, Souvanna declared, should determine the composition of the new government.

3. Souvanna had expressed the belief that the ICC could do a better job than the NNC in Laos. Although at first Souvanna had taken the position that a 14-nation conference was essential, he ultimately had agreed with Ambassador Trimble that a conference would not be necessary if interested countries made written unilateral declarations recognizing and supporting the neutrality of Laos.

4. Souvanna also had expressed the opinion that the Bloc did not want a Communist Laos. He stated that Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, and others had told him that they "wanted [to] prevent Laos from becoming [a] Western base because [the] Chicoms and DRVN need peace for [the] next 30 or 40 years in order [to] develop their countries." A Communist Laos would only bring insecurity to them, as the "US would not accept it."



The Bloc, Souvanna had commented, looked upon Laos as a buffer.

When questioned as to whether the Soviets, in view of their substantial build up of military equipment in the Plaine des Jarres area, would permit areas under PL control to return to the Laotian Government, Souvanna declared with great assurance that they certainly would; Laos would not permit "otherwise."

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1141, 7 Mar 61.

6 Mar

According to an official Cambodian press release, Sihanouk, in a message to Chou En-lai, had said that he and his Government fully shared the Chinese Communist viewpoint that it was indispensable to preserve the spirit and principle of the 1954 Geneva Accords. Sihanouk had declared further that the problem posed by two governments in Laos was inseparable from that of settling the problems of civil war and foreign military assistance to the two sides.

The best solution, Sihanouk had declared, would be a cease-fire and cessation of foreign interference followed by reciprocal self-dissolution of both governments and the formation of a new government of national union. The principal and urgent task of the new government should be the preparation for free elections.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1142, 7 Mar 61.

6 Mar

According to an official Cambodian press release, North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong declared that both the origin and the immediate cause of the present dangerous situation in Laos resided in US intervention in the internal affairs of that country with a view to transforming Laos into an American military base. This would, Pham Van Dong warned, constitute a "permanent threat to our security."

Dong also stated that the only "radical" solution to the situation was to put an end to US intervention and assure respect for the basic national rights of the Lao people, as stipulated in the Geneva Accords. The North Vietnamese official also stated that he fully endorsed Sihanouk's proposal for a conference.

(The message was published in the Cambodian official news bulletin on 15 March. The US Embassy reported its contents to the Secretary of State the same day.)

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1194, 15 Mar 61.

6-7  
Mar

According to a PEO intelligence report submitted to CINCPAC, FAL units of Force SST retreated under enemy attack and gave up RJ 7-13. The enemy attacks began with platoon-size probing actions supported by artillery. When FAL company-size units gave way before these probes, the enemy committed two companies in a well executed turning movement. At this point the FAL forces gave up their positions and retreated rapidly. By the morning of 7 March they had withdrawn north and south of RJ 7-13.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 93661, 15 Mar 61.

7 Mar

In response to an inquiry from CINCPAC, Chief JUSMAG

[REDACTED]

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 081927Z Mar 61; 081923Z Mar 61.

7 Mar

The US Ambassador to the USSR, commenting on the British proposed reply to the Soviets (see item 4 March), told Secretary Rusk that he believed the "important thing at present is to keep situation fluid."

The Soviets were confident, he said, that the military situation in Laos and the attitude of the Asian neutrals, as well as the British and French desire for compromise, would permit them to be very firm about a conference.

Under the circumstances, Ambassador Thompson believed there was some advantage to the British proposal, for ICC discussions in New Delhi. It would keep the Soviets engaged in finding a forum for a negotiated settlement, and it would keep the Chinese Communists out of the picture until a better idea of Soviet intentions was obtained.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2107, 7 Mar 61

7 Mar

Ambassador Brown told Secretary Rusk that the RLG was sending Phoumi, Bouavan Norasing, and Ngon Sananikone to Phnom Penh on 9 March to confer with Souvanna. During a discussion on Phoumi's proposed trip, the US Ambassador had told Phoumi that Souvanna was leaving on a world tour on 11 March, and the US felt that his meeting with Souvanna would be very important. Phoumi had replied that he intended to explain the RLG policy of neutrality to Souvanna and also tell him of the RLG's desire to form a new government that would contain all nationalist elements, including Souvanna. Ambassador Brown had agreed that such a government would be highly desirable. Further, the US would be inclined to give full support to any government of national reconciliation which the Laotians themselves worked out, providing: 1) the PL was not included; and 2) Phoumi remained in charge of military affairs.

The US Ambassador also had advised the Laotian General that the US thought it would be important in his talks with Souvanna to stress the King's proclamation that he and the government of Laos bore no ill will to any Laotian and had a spirit of conciliation and friendship for all.

Ambassador Brown had pointed out to Phoumi that Souvanna's idea of supplemental elections, which might give the NLHX a voice in the Assembly, but not in the government, might be "usefully accepted." Phoumi had

replied that he had considered this and had no objections to it. In addition, he had agreed with Brown that Souvanna's suggestion for general elections at this time was premature.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1636 and 1642, both 7 Mar 61.

7 Mar

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Trimble reported that Prince Sihanouk had claimed Laos was now divided between pro-Bloc and pro-West supporters and that there were no real neutralists left. Sihanouk had also asserted that, if a settlement could not be reached in the near future, the only alternative would be a divided Laos, a prospect he greatly deplored.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1149, 7 Mar 61.

8 Mar

Commenting on the proposed British reply to the Soviets (see item 4 March), Ambassador Brown declared that British acceptance of the proposal for the reactivation of the ICC would "spell doom" to the NNC since the two were "mutually exclusive." The doom of the NNC would be a "propaganda blow to US initiative," and redound unfavorably on the King.

Further, an ICC meeting would be likely to accelerate rather than preclude an international conference. In Ambassador Brown's opinion, if a reactivated ICC decided it needed new instructions, the Soviets would use the meeting to argue for a Geneva-type conference for which Poland and India would probably vote.

Ambassador Brown did not agree that a government headed by Souvanna and excluding the PL and the Boun Oum-Phoumi group, as suggested by the British, was the only one that would be capable of ending the fighting. He pointed out to Secretary Rusk that both the RLG and Souvanna had expressed a willingness to serve under the King as Prime Minister, and that even one of the King's close relatives might be satisfactory, providing an agreement was reached on the rest of the Cabinet. This was the key question, Brown said, since it would determine whether Souvanna would dissolve his "government" and join or abet the successor to the present RLG. Moreover, he continued, it was by no means certain that creation of a government headed by Souvanna would, in itself, stop the fighting since the PL did not take orders from him. His premiership, however, would probably make "the other side more inclined in this direction."

In conclusion Ambassador Brown expressed the opinion that, until the US and Great Britain arrived at an agreed position on the military situation, the two countries would probably have difficulty in pursuing together the same international political courses of action.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1657, 8 Mar 61.

8 Mar



[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 991467, 8 Mar 61.

9 Mar

In response to the Presidential instructions of 3 March (see item), the JCS produced a "Concept for the Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres." The JCS plan was designed to seize this base complex and deny it to the enemy. The plan called for preliminary interdiction operations by aircraft and Meo guerrillas, followed by a two-pronged FAL attack from the East and South, and culminating in an airborne assault with which the two ground attacking forces were to link up.

The JCS recognized that the FAL lacked the means to execute this operation. Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres would require reinforcement from the US and other friendly powers. The JCS recommended, therefore, that the following reinforcing measures be taken:

1. Increase the guerrilla capability in Laos by expanding the existing 3,000-men Meo irregular force as rapidly as possible by 1 April.
2. Provide 16 "sterile" B-26s in order to interdict enemy lines of communication, destroy supply dumps and installations, and fragment troop concentrations.

[REDACTED]

3. Provide 16 additional helicopters to CAT for airlift and pickup in forward areas lacking landing fields for fixed wing aircraft. These aircraft were to be provided by the Department of Defense. The crews, "sheep-dipped" and ostensibly employed by CAT, were also to come from the Department of Defense. Maintenance was to be furnished by a Marine Corps maintenance unit.

4. Provide the necessary airlift by reinforcing CAT with four C-130s, three DC-4s, and a C-47. To shorten the turn-around time of the CAT aircraft, authorize the USAF to airlift supplies to Vientiane.

5. Reinforce the FAL artillery support by obtaining four volunteer Thai batteries of 105-mm howitzers.

6. Furnish the necessary operational and logistical advice and technical assistance by augmenting PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand.

Recognizing that the will to win was as important as the means, the JCS urged remedial action to improve the leadership in the FAL. According to the JCS, failures in leadership had resulted from the fact that Phoumi was "devoting most of his time to coping with governmental problems, instead of fighting the war." These problems had arisen "largely from efforts by the United States, the United Kingdom and France to persuade

Phoumi to broaden his government base and 'win support of the Lao people.'" These problems, combined with the "conflicting pressures of diverse family interests and distrust of his subordinate leaders," had made Phoumi feel insecure. His refusal to retain battle-tested, successful leaders in crucial command positions had been one result of this distrust. In addition, doubts as to the extent of US support had contributed to Phoumi's feelings of insecurity.

To improve Laotian leadership, the JCS recommended the following:

(1) The US mission in Laos should be directed to accept as a matter of overriding priority the military mission of recapturing PDJ and should support Phoumi accordingly.

(2) Present efforts to broaden the base of the RLG and to seek a political solution should be given secondary priority to enable Phoumi to concentrate on the PDJ military operation.

(3) US influence with other governments should support these priorities. Other governments should be informed that it is our judgment that a satisfactory political settlement is not attainable until there is an improvement in the military situation.

(4) All US personnel, including the Ambassador and the United States Mission, should impress upon Phoumi the importance of putting his best commanders in the field and relieving inept officers who are losing battles for him.

(5) Above all, the additional air and artillery support and logistic means needed to capture the Plaine des Jarres should be provided. The Chief, PEO, should be authorized to inform Phoumi of support to be provided, operations to be undertaken and results expected.

(TS) "Concept for the Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres," 10 Mar 61, JCS 091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

9 Mar

The President approved the following 17 military courses of action for Southeast Asia:

1. [REDACTED]

2. DOD to supply 16 H-34 helicopters [REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED]

4. DOD to provide a maintenance base and 300 maintenance personnel for the 16 helicopters.

5. DOD to make available four C-130s to CAT.

6. [REDACTED]

7. [REDACTED] the C-47 and three DC-4s with crews.

8. USAF to resume direct supply delivery to Vientiane in case of emergency.

9. Department of State to obtain up to four 105-mm howitzer batteries from Thailand.

10. DOD to augment PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand by approximately 100 personnel each.

11. DOD to make available on Okinawa eight B-26s with necessary spares.

12. [REDACTED]

13. [REDACTED]

14. Department of State to draft instructions to Ambassador Brown for approval by the President.

15. CHPEO to press Phoumi to improve the quality of FAL leadership.

16. [REDACTED]

17. [REDACTED]

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991705, 11 Mar 61, and JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

9 Mar According to the New York Times, US Ambassador Thompson and Soviet Premier Khrushchev met in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk to discuss international issues confronting the two nations.

(U) NYT, 10 Mar 61, 1.

10 Mar According to FAL reports, Muong Kassy, a village about 20 miles south of RJ 7-13 on Route 13, fell to the Pathet Lao. The FAL claimed it was establishing a blocking position 10 miles south of the captured village.  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 91842, 10 Mar 61.

10 Mar A joint communique, signed by Phoumi and Souvanna at the end of their two-day meeting in Phnom Penh, declared that the two parties recognized that a policy of "strict neutrality and conventional neutralization" of Laos constituted the fundamental basis for regaining peace and national concord. Both leaders agreed that foreign interference must cease in order to permit the restoration of a climate of mutual confidence for national reconciliation. This could only be accomplished, the communique pointed out, with the aid of an impartial commission which could operate over all of Laos.

General Phoumi affirmed his confidence in Prince Souvanna as the "only Lao statesman" able to serve as a link with the NLHX, and, the communique said, Prince Souvanna assured the General he would do all he could

Prince Souvanna suggested a meeting at Phnom Penh of representatives of the three groups whose forces were now facing each other in Laos, with a view toward finding a definite solution to the national problem. General Phoumi, the press statement continued, accepted the principle of the meeting but stated that it could not take place until after cessation of foreign interferences.

(The communique, although signed on the morning of the 10th, was not made public until the following day.)

The delegation had stated that, after a cease-fire and cessation of delivery of foreign arms, the "first" step would be to have a neutral commission (Cambodia, Burma, Malaya) make a fact-finding tour of all of Laos. The "second" step would be to convene an international commission that would receive the findings of the NNC and would guarantee the neutrality of Laos. Finally, the "third" step would be a round table conference between Phoumi, Souphanouvong, and Souvanna.

The US diplomat asked the Laotian representative if Phoumi had been disappointed with the results of the visit. The Laotian Ambassador had replied "slyly" that Phoumi had not been at all disappointed. Phoumi



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had not expected Souvanna to accept his proposals and his visit had been just a maneuver, designed to show people in Laos that he had done all in his power to bring Souvanna back to Laos and into the RLG.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1669, 10 Mar 61;  
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1167, 10 Mar 61; (U)  
Msg, Phnom Penh to State, 1169, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State additional details of the Souvanna-Phoumi meeting, as provided by Phoumi. According to Phoumi, Souvanna had stated that if he returned at once to Vientiane he would lose his influence with the other side; he could be more useful, therefore, in Phnom Penh.

Souvanna also had stated that his interpretation of the NNC proposal was the same as Sihanouk's. Phoumi had explained that the NNC was, in essence based on Sihanouk's proposal; Souvanna had then agreed that the NNC was better than the ICC, and stated that he would attempt to persuade Sihanouk to accept the chairmanship of the NNC.

Ambassador Brown had reminded Phoumi that the US had serious reservations about an international conference. Phoumi had replied that he thought it might be possible to avoid a conference by stalling and "otherwise," after the NNC had begun to operate.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1671, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

Secretary Rusk told Ambassador Brown that US reaction to the Phoumi-Souvanna talks was one of "guarded optimism." If Souvanna's initial attitude was a sincere reflection of his willingness to cooperate, and if Phoumi's reports of their meetings were accurate, it might be the beginning of a workable rapprochement of an indigenous character.

However, the Secretary cautioned Ambassador Brown that any undue haste, "unilaterally or multilaterally," in attempting to "stage manage" every facet of the delicate situation might be counterproductive.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 952, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

The JCS requested CINCPAC to supply [REDACTED] 16 H-34 or HUS helicopters "at a time and place mutually agreeable," and to be prepared to move the necessary maintenance personnel for 20 such helicopters to Thailand when directed (approved actions 2 and 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991704, 11 Mar 61.

12 Mar

Recalling the disastrous influence that Dien Bien Phu had had on the Geneva Conference, the Secretary of State expressed deep concern to Ambassador Brown over the probability that the Communists might take advantage of the seemingly conciliatory climate to make a major military effort in Laos. The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that this would place the Soviets in a most advantageous position to negotiate or, to communize Laos by force of minority element backed by Viet Minh personnel and Soviet supply.

Secretary Rusk Stated that every effort, therefore, should be made now to re-establish the situation with



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the military means available. At the same time, he added, preparations must go forward against the possible deterioration of the situation and the necessity of raising the level of military actions.

The US still believed that a political settlement that would insure the genuine independence and integrity of Laos (similar to Austria's neutrality) was the best solution. In view of the present exploration for a political settlement and the danger that the Communists might attempt to push their military advantage, it was essential, Secretary Rusk declared, that the US be prepared to give the RLG additional military support. It was also necessary that the RLG be so reorganized as to obtain international recognition and to make the position of the alleged Souvanna "government" untenable. Therefore, the Secretary of State requested Ambassador Brown to review the situation along these lines with Phoumi, and perhaps with the King. If possible, the US Ambassador was instructed to "push" Phoumi's suggestion of having either the King or a member of the Royal family assume the Premiership, with Boun Oum and Souvanna as Deputy Prime Ministers.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 957, 12 Mar 61.

12 Mar The Secretary of Defense informed the Secretary of State, the Director, CIA, and the Chairman, JCS, that the President authorized the movement, as promptly as possible, of eight CAT B-26 aircraft and crews from Taiwan to Thailand (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Memo, SecDef to SecState, Dir CIA, CJCS, 13 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

12 Mar The Chairman, JCS, informed the Secretary of Defense that CINCPAC had ordered two sanitized HUS-1 helicopters airlifted to Bangkok for assignment to Air America (approved action 2; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar The Department of State informed US Embassies abroad of a lengthy conversation of the Secretary of State with the British and French Ambassadors.

The Secretary had stated that the US did not believe the military situation in Laos hopeless. The Secretary had speculated, however, that perhaps the Phnom Penh discussions had made the FAL field commanders less aggressive; on the other hand the prospect of a settlement possibly had moved the PL to enlarge its control.

The Secretary had stressed to the Allied diplomats the importance of removing the pretense of legality which a Souvanna "government" afforded the Communists. Until this "front" had been removed, either by Souvanna's return to Vientiane to participate in the RLG or by his removal to Paris, the US did not, according to the Secretary, "look forward" to the early convening of an international conference which would immediately debate the legality of the two governments. Furthermore, to

reconvene the ICC would lead to such a conference, since the ICC, as India had frankly specified, required further terms of reference.

The British Ambassador had queried the Secretary on the timing of the British reply to the USSR proposal for the reconvening of the ICC; the Secretary had stated that the US favored further delay of the reply "pending developments and further discussions."

French Ambassador Alphand had reiterated the French position that a tripartite approach to the Soviets was necessary. Alphand had also noted that, in the French view, Ambassador Thompson's approach to Khrushchev had omitted two essential points - reference to the Geneva Accords as the essential basis for any solution in Laos, and recognition that there must be a place for the NLHX in the Laotian political structure.

The Secretary had replied, concerning the necessity of NLHX representation, that the US would not object if the NLHX won some seats in an appropriately elected Assembly. But "this [was] quite different," the Secretary had concluded, "from [a] place in [the] government itself."

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1384, 14 Mar 61.

13 Mar The US Minister in London informed the Secretary of State that British Foreign Office reaction to the Phoumi/Souvanna meeting (see item 10 March) was "guarded" because of lack of information. They were encouraged, however, because the two factions were trying to find a solution.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3653, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar The Secretary of Defense, "in accordance with the authority granted . . . by the President this morning," told the Chairman, JCS, to "take the necessary action" to accomplish the following: 1) arrange for the de-mothballing of 16 additional B-26s and the "sheep dipping" of 16 additional B-26 crews; 2) instruct Admiral Felt to arrange for the use of five Laotian T-6s, piloted by Laotians [REDACTED] on bombing missions.

The B-26s and crews were to be "made ready for operations" but were to be retained in the continental US.

(TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Mar 61, CJCS - 091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

13 Mar The Chairman, JCS, reported to the Secretary of Defense that CINCPAC had alerted a Marine Air Base Squadron for movement to Udorn to support 20 HUS-1 helicopters (approved action 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar At a conference between representatives of the Joint Staff [REDACTED] the decision was taken to seek the 16 volunteer helicopter pilots required to implement approved action 3 (see item 9 March) from the Marine Corps before turning to the other services.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991823, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar The JCS authorized CINCPAC to make all necessary preparations for bombing with T-6 aircraft in Laos. ✓

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This authorization included the positioning of bombs in Vientiane and the use of [REDACTED] Lao pilots. However, the use of napalm was prohibited.  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991799, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, Indian Ambassador Ratnam in Laos had been pressing King Savang for a return of the ICC or even an enlarged ICC to Laos, the enlarged ICC to include Cambodia and Burma, but not Malaya. Ratnam had argued that the advantage of the ICC was that it was already in existence, and could begin to operate immediately with recognized authority.

Phoumi had stated he had countered the Indian diplomat's efforts by suggesting to the King that, if the ICC was to be enlarged, Malaya should be included. Furthermore, the ICC should be a "new" commission rather than an enlarged one.

Phoumi, in explaining to the US Ambassador why he had not discussed his proposal of a reorganized government with the King, had stated his belief that any reorganized government should "start from [the] beginning," with Souvanna participating. Any reorganized government "before that" would necessarily be temporary and unable to "take positive attitudes," and this, Phoumi had declared, would be undesirable for the country and the war effort.

Ambassador Brown had summarized, in response to a query from Phoumi, the US positions, as follows: 1) the US was pleased that Phoumi supported the NNC and was prepared to consider, albeit not enthusiastically, a conference called to ratify and implement the actions of the NNC, but was opposed to a conference before the activation of the NNC, believing that such a conference would produce a "propaganda field day" in which the interests of Laos would likely be submerged; 2) the US wholeheartedly approved of the effort Phoumi was making towards reconciliation of the nationalist elements in the country; and 3) the US felt that the military effort should be "continuous," and was prepared to support Phoumi in this effort.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1693, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The JCS informed CINCPAC that he was "authorized to airlift supplies direct to Vientiane when in your judgement supply requirements are sufficiently urgent" (approved action 8; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991798, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense [REDACTED] the additional C-47 for employment in Laos required by approved action 7 (see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991823, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in accordance with instructions from the Secretary of Defense, ordered Lt. Gen. T. J. H. Trapnell, Commanding General of the XVIII Airborne Corps, to depart on 15 March on a survey and familiarization visit to the Southeast Asian area. Gen. Trapnell was ordered to do the following:

1. Personally appraise the adequacy of the US plan for the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres.

2. Examine the extent to which Phoumi had re-assigned his military leaders to assure that the most competent leaders were in command of the forward areas.

3. Appraise the relationships between Ambassador Brown, Admiral Felt, General Boyle, and Phoumi, and determine the extent to which Ambassador Brown was exerting positive or negative influence on the approved program.

Gen. Trapnell was to plan his mission so as to return to Washington by approximately 25 March (see item 31 March).

(TS) Memo SecDef to CJCS, 10 Mar 61; (TS) Memo, CJCS to Lt. Gen. T.J.H. Trapnell, CG, XVIII Airborne Corps (STRAC), CM-133-61, 14 Mar 61. Both in CJCS-091 Laos (2).

14 Mar

The US Charge d'Affaires in Phnom Penh reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had asserted that creation of the NNC and convocation of a 14 (or 13)-nation conference should be simultaneous. Laos should not be a participant in the conference because there would be endless debates over who should be its representatives. Instead, Souvanna had stated, representatives of the three factions should meet at the time of the conference to reach agreement on internal problems - such as elections. Their decisions would be communicated when appropriate, to the conference for action by the NNC. At this point, the international conference might be adjourned. Following the elections and formation of the new representative government, Souvanna had said, the conference could be reconvened to "arrange for necessary guarantees of neutrality of Laos and Cambodia."

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1186, 14 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The US Ambassador in Paris informed the Secretary of State that recent talks with the French Foreign Office had indicated that their initial reaction to the Phoumi/Souvanna talks was one of "guarded optimism." However, the Foreign Office was skeptical that a political solution could be found as easily as Souvanna and Phoumi seemed to believe.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3810, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The Secretary of State told US Embassies abroad that Ambassador Thompson had discussed with Premier Khrushchev (see item 9 March) the US objective of a "truly neutral but truly independent Laos." Thompson had assured the Soviet Premier that the US position on Laos was not one "of maneuver," but one based on a genuine effort to reach its stated objective.

Khrushchev had commented, Secretary Rusk said, that the US statement regarding a neutral Laos differed "agreeably" from the usual US position on neutralist policies of individual states. The Premier also noted his government's endorsement of Sihanouk's 14-Nation Conference and Soviet support for Souvanna as the head of the "legitimate" RLG. Later in the US-Soviet talk

Khrushchev had observed that "aggravating military conflict" should be avoided, and efforts for a peaceful solution should be continued, although a concrete way to accomplish this might not yet be clear.

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular 1387, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The official Cambodian news bulletin published a note from Chinese Communist Premier Chou En-lai to Prince Sihanouk. In the note Chou En-lai insisted that the solution of the Lao questions be based on the principle and spirit of the Geneva Accords. The Chinese Premier asserted that the convocation of Sihanouk's proposed conference constituted the only reasonable and practical solution to the Laotian question. The Chinese Premier declared that any other solution "setting aside [an] enlarged Geneva Conference," would not be favorable to peace in Laos and to the "detente in Indochina and SEA."

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1193, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

Prince Souvanna Phoumi departed Phnom Penh on his world tour. (See items 23, 25, 29, and 31 March.)

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1196, 15 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1504, 16 Mar 61.

15 Mar

In response to the Secretary of State's 11 March message (see item), Ambassador Brown stated that he agreed the US should not attempt to "stage manage" events in Phnom Penh too closely. Brown believed, however, that the US should be prepared for certain proposals that would probably arise, such as: 1) a proposal for a "change in composition NNC to substitute India for Malaya, or to combined commission or enlarged ICC" (see item 14 March); 2) a proposal for a "fairly immediate" cease-fire; and 3) a demand that the cessation of the delivery of supplies to the PL be matched by a cessation of US supplies to the FAL, or at least by their reduction or supervision.

Ambassador Brown informed Secretary Rusk that he had not pressed Phoumi for an immediate reorganization of the RLG (see items 12, 14 March); the US diplomat did not want to give Phoumi "too much" impression that the US lacked confidence in his government.

In conclusion, Brown told the Secretary of State that he still had reservations regarding the King's entrance into the political arena directly, and suggested that "this card be played"

only if it would result in Souvanna's either participating in the RLG or dissolving his own "government."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1694, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that each of the 16 helicopters [redacted] be provided two pilots and a crew chief. The original plan to furnish only one pilot per helicopter would "prove dangerous and give inadequate support," said CINCPAC (approved action 3; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991885, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that [redacted] B-26s were ready to take off from Taiwan for Thailand as soon as the Department of State obtained the necessary clearances (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991885, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that Meo forces under arms were estimated by their commander to be about 3,300. [redacted] supplying equipment to additional Meos as fast as they could be assembled to receive it. In view of the fact that at least 3,000 additional Meos, according to the Meo commander, were available for action against the Communists, [redacted] to organize and equip an additional 1,000 over and above the 4,000 already planned for (approved action, see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992064, 17 Mar 61.

16 Mar

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown stated that, according to the Australian Ambassador, Australia was reluctant to provide military support to the Boun Oum Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1706, 16 Mar 61.

16 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense [redacted] four civilian crews to fly C-130s. US Air Force Pacific was preparing a 10-day refresher course for the crews (approved action 6; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991987, 16 Mar 61.

16 Mar

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1647, 16 Mar 61.



~~TOP SECRET~~

16-17  
Mar

The US Ambassador to Laos reported to the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, a Chinese Nationalist representative had begun negotiations with the RLG for the removal of Nationalist irregulars from Laos to Formosa.

On 17 March, reported the US Ambassador to Thailand to the Secretary of State, the first plane load of Nationalist irregulars took off for Formosa.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1704, 16 Mar 61;  
(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1675, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, the second Phnom Penh meeting with Souvanna (14, 15 March) had ended in failure. Phoumi had reported that Souvanna told the RLG delegation that he had been "roundly criticized from all quarters" as a result of the joint communique issued after Phoumi's first visit (see item 10 March), and he had been forced to change his position. He now insisted, therefore, that the "first" step would have to be the convening of a 14-nation conference. X

Ambassador Brown reported that Souvanna had shown the Phoumi delegation a letter from Souphanouvong stating that the Pathet Lao recognized Souvanna as the only representative of the Government of Laos. The PL would continue to support Souvanna, Souphanouvong had stated, "so long as [he] followed line of policy agreed with PL."

An RLG press communique (issued after Brown's conversation with Phoumi) declared that the RLG delegation had gone to Phnom Penh to renew contact with Souvanna and to implement as soon as possible the resolutions adopted by the two leaders at the first meeting. Souvanna, however, had announced that he was leaving on a world tour the following day.

It appeared that Souvanna, the communique declared, in eluding previously agreed-upon commitments, had not been able to "play [the] part of intermediary" as he had undertaken to do. Further, by his departure at a time when "all Lao must be present and must rally together to find [the] solution to [the] national crisis," Souvanna had proved once again, as on 9 December (when he had fled Vientiane), his "incapacity to lead or even to influence activities" of the pro-Communists.

In a separate message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown expressed the opinion that the results of the second Phnom Penh meeting clearly indicated that Souvanna was following the straight PL-Soviet line. It was either because he was unwilling or, more likely, unable to influence that line in any sense of acting as a true mediator, the Ambassador added.

Souvanna's departure on a world tour, Brown said, eliminated the possibility of progress toward a political solution through RLG negotiations with him in the near future. It appeared to Brown, therefore, that if an effort were to be made to achieve progress on the political front in the near future, it would have to be done by discussions with the Soviets.

Brown suggested that it would be worthwhile to have Ambassador Bruce talk with Souvanna while he was in London. If the US should be prepared to accept a conference after the activation of the NNC, and Souvanna could be convinced of this, Bruce could encourage him to attempt, on this basis, to bridge the gap between the two sides.

On the same day, Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State from Phnom Penh that the Laotian Ambassador to Cambodia had reported that during the meeting, Souvanna, under pressure by Souphanouvong, had taken the position that a meeting of the three leaders should take place at the same time, rather than before the international conference, so that decisions reached by the leaders could be guaranteed by the conference. The Laotian diplomat had added that Souvanna had stated that if there were a conference, he would return immediately from Europe.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1714, 17 Mar 61;  
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1716, 17 Mar 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1718, 17 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1209, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the necessary arrangements with the Thais concerning stationing B-26s and helicopters in Thailand had been completed (see item 16 March). Movement of aircraft to Udorn and Takhli could now proceed. X

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1671, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that on Taiwan a second group of [REDACTED] B-26s was ready for operations. These planes were waiting for crews to be provided by the USAF (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992064, 17 Mar 61.

18 Mar The Secretary of State informed US Embassies that the results of his meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister had been "quite negative." The US had endeavored to find out what the Soviets really had in mind for Laos, but Gromyko had been "completely elusive," refusing to give substantive answers and repeatedly returning to the Soviet proposal that discussions on Laos must begin with an international conference. Mr. Rusk also stated that, although it had been agreed that the objective of both nations was a neutral and independent Laos, Gromyko would not discuss the means to achieve this end.

(S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1529 (et al.), 18 Mar 61.

18 Mar CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi was "rather desperate and cannot be persuaded to go on the offensive on any front. His concept now is to dig in and to hold what he has."

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 94444, 18 Mar 61.

20 Mar The JCS informed CINCPAC that they considered it "basic to future operations" that the situation in Laos be restored by the recapture of RJ 7-13, followed by implementation of the original plan to recapture the Plaine des Jarres. The JCS requested CINCPAC's recommendations regarding reinforcements of personnel or materiel needed to retake RJ 7-13.

~~TOP SECRET~~

The JCS also requested CINCPAC's comments on a plan to reinforce the Meos northeast of the Plaine des Jarres with small FAL units in order to "disrupt the enemy sanctuary."


With regard to the employment of B-26s (see item 9 March), the JCS advised CINCPAC that "it would be desirable to make the first strike with the maximum number of aircraft in order to gain surprise and to obtain fullest shock effect." The JCS did not visualize a partial commitment of the B-26s unless such action became necessary to prevent capture of the capital or some similar major set back. The fire power from even eight of the aircraft, however, could achieve decisive results. In conclusion, the JCS requested CINCPAC's comments on the effects of an initial strike using 8, 12, or 16 aircraft against supply dumps, heavy weapons and transport, or in close support of troops.

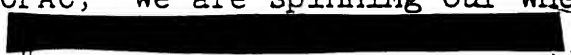
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992240, 20 Mar 61.

20 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that the Air Force had delivered four C-130s to Okinawa for transfer to CAT (approved action 5; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992185, 20 Mar 61.

20-21  
Mar



CINCPAC replied that additional artillery was far less important than the determination of Phoumi to launch an attack and the ability of his commanders to carry it out. "Until such time as CHPEO can assure us that Phoumi wants to fight and will fight for recapture of 7-13 road junction and PDJ [Plaine des Jarres]," commented CINCPAC, "we are spinning our wheels in talking about  for four 105 batteries."

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992241, 20 Mar 61; and CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 95339, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar A White House meeting resulted in a reversal of US policy for a political solution of the crisis in Laos. As reported by the Secretary of State to Ambassador Brown, the US would now agree to a meeting of the ICC and the holding of a 14-nation conference. The US had consistently opposed these courses of action (see items 23 and 31 December, 7, 18, 23 January, 20 February), while the Communist Bloc had favored them (see items 22 December, 11, 18 January, 1, 2, 11, 18, 23, 28 February).

The US policy decisions concerning a military solution, however, would remain unchanged. Approved courses of action (see item 9 March) would continue to be implemented in order to meet all eventualities.

In addition, said the Secretary, the US should prepare an appeal by the RLG and the King for military intervention by SEATO, and bring about the presentation of this appeal in the event that the PL offensive did not cease. The US would expect SEATO to respond to this appeal by placing a SEATO force in Thailand (see item 23 March).

~~TOP SECRET~~

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to describe to Phoumi and Savang the proposed policy. The Ambassador should emphasize that the US remained committed to a peaceful settlement but was determined to preserve the independence of Laos, by whatever means necessary; the Ambassador should also urge that the Laotian leaders must, during this major test of PL and Soviet intentions, rally the morale of the FAL and the RLG.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 992, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

Ambassador Bruce reported to the Secretary of State that, at a meeting at the Foreign Office, British officials had expressed the opinion that at this late date, the only alternative to an international conference on Laos would be the "actual occupation of Laos." The British had also commented, Bruce said, that it was quite probable the Soviets were insisting on a conference because it was the only thing the Russians and Chinese had been able to agree upon in the Laotian situation.

Ambassador Bruce also informed Secretary Rusk that it appeared that the British Government continued to regard Souvanna as the only person capable of bringing about a government of national unity in Laos. The British feared, however, that he had come "dangerously close" to jeopardizing this position by a too deep involvement with the Communists and premature negotiations with Phoumi.

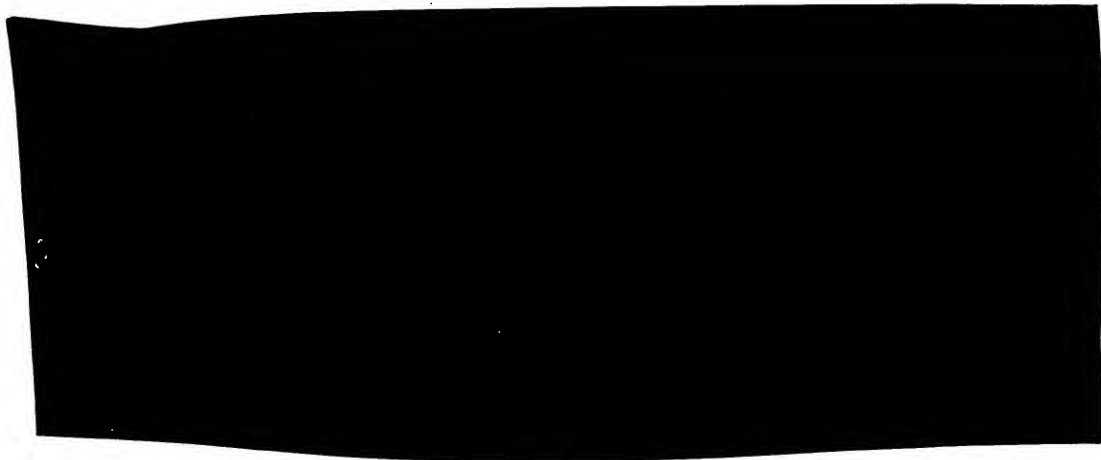
(S) Msgs, London to SecState, 3801, 3802, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

Ambassador Johnson cabled the Secretary of State that the French Ambassador to Thailand had been "strenuously attempting to impress upon Paris" the importance of the coming SEATO conference to the French position in Southeast Asia. The French Ambassador recognized, said Johnson, that the basic problem was that France from the beginning had been a reluctant member of SEATO; he had implied that France did not actually accept the concept of SEATO but believed rather that the Southeast Asian nations should be neutral. Thus the French often seemed to pursue only obstructionist policies in SEATO. The French diplomat considered it essential that the SEATO conference discuss and resolve differences in the SEATO members' views on the organization; the French Ambassador had no indication, however, of the French Government's attitude.

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1697, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar



[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1442, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

CHPEO reported to the JCS on steps taken by Phoumi to improve leadership of the FAL (approved action 15; see item 9 March). Since 9 March the Laotian leader had replaced one FAL Groupe Mobile Commander and was planning to replace two others. Of these officers, two were considered by PEO to be competent combat leaders. The third officer, "while not energetic in . . . [a] subdivision command has [a] reputation as [an] experienced combat leader." Of the three remaining forward area commanders, PEO considered one to be "a doer of demonstrated ability," another to have done "fairly well" with a combat command, and the third to be a "very weak commander" who had "failed to take decisive action to save [the] Plaine des Jarres."

The overall army commander in the Luang Prabang area, reported the CHPEO, had been well schooled at the French Ecole de Guerre but was a poor logistic planner and was "not decisive." He did not accept guidance from US advisers and did not want US training teams with units in contact with the enemy.

The CHPEO also listed 15 other officers whom he considered to be "competent leaders."

In an over-all evaluation of the military leadership in Laos, CHPEO pointed out that the Laotian Army was young, that most of its officers had only limited professional training, and that combat experience until November 1960 had been limited to local anti-guerrilla operations. The major obstacle to improved military leadership was the practice of appointing commanders because of their political and family connections rather than their ability.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to JCS, DA IN 95300, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

The first group of four B-26s had arrived by this date at Takhli, Thailand, according to a report from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992266, 21 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The French Ambassador in Washington presented to the Department of State the French view of the proposed British conditional acceptance of the Soviet proposal for reactivation of the ICC (see item 3 March).

The French considered the British demarche as a first move to which the USSR would probably not agree without further negotiations. The French believed that the US, UK, and French Ambassadors in Moscow should conduct negotiations, which should include the following subjects: 1) cease-fire, 2) control of cease-fire, 3) cessation of foreign aid to Laos, and 4) a return to the status provided by the Geneva Agreement.

Finally, the French Ambassador stated that his government had agreed to an international conference

on Laos but considered that preparations for the conference should be carefully made and prior agreement should be reached with the USSR on the "principles of settlement."

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3888, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, according to the Australian Ambassador to Laos, Boun Oum had declared that a reorganization of the Laotian Government was definitely not being considered.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1747, 23 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The Secretary of State instructed the US Ambassadors to Thailand, Australia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Canada, South Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and New Zealand to inform their respective host governments, at the highest appropriate level, of the following:

As evidence US determination seek peaceful settlement Lao crisis US has authorized Co-Chairman Geneva Conference convey to Soviet Co-Chairman that US would be prepared agree convening ICC and 14-nation conference provided that as essential prerequisite Communist supported Pathet Lao offensive stop immediately and discussions between Lao leaders toward broadened RLG reopened. However, as alternative course, in event Soviets unresponsive our conciliatory offer which includes conference proposed by Soviets, we also proposed consultations in SEATO in order be prepared move promptly to assist Lao Government militarily.

The Secretary of State also instructed the Ambassadors to inform the host governments that the US was "fully determined" to undertake the alternative course of action [SEATO] in the absence of prompt Soviet compliance with the request for the cessation of hostilities. The Secretary went on to say that readiness measures for this course of action were now proceeding; if the PL offensive did not cease, the RLG request for SEATO intervention could be expected "soon." The US hoped, the Secretary continued, that SEATO could agree on a course of action that would provide "favorable, adequate and prompt response" to the RLG request.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1445, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the Canadian government had been informed of the US position on the proposed British acceptance of the Soviet proposal to reconvene the ICC (see item 22 March) but Canada had not yet decided whether or not to participate in the ICC. The Canadian Ambassador had declared that his government was fully aware of both the urgency of the situation and the magnitude of the US concession that the new course of action represented. The guiding considerations for Canadian participation remained, however, the consent of the RLG and a reasonable expectation of the success of the ICC. The Canadian Ambassador had conjectured that a "strictly limited role" for the ICC would meet this second "consideration."

Secretary Rusk asked Ambassador Brown to determine if there would be any difficulty in obtaining RLG consent to such a role for the ICC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 996, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

US Ambassador Roundtree informed the Secretary of State that Pakistan's President Ayub appeared to be less than enthusiastic about Ambassador Harriman's explanation of the new US policy to accept a cease-fire in Laos followed by an international conference (see item 21 March). Although Ayub was not directly critical, he seemed dissatisfied that the US was ready to make concessions and had expressed the fear that this would mean at the minimum, a divided Laos and possibly a Communist take-over.

(S) Msg, Karachi to SecState, 1622, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

Ambassador Brown outlined in a memorandum cabled to the Secretary of State an "additional idea" on Laos as "a supplement to and not a substitute for other plans."

The US foreign policy premise as laid down in the President's inaugural speech was, said Brown, to approach the Communists with "both carrot and stick." Concerning Laos, the NNC had been the carrot, an enticement which the Communists had not indicated they were inclined to accept as long as they could continue "beating us with a stick." Therefore, the immediate task of the US was to seize the stick and so apply it to the Communists as to make the carrot more attractive.

US military aid to Laos had in the past, Brown continued, been premised on the furnishing to the FAL of the means to cope with purely internal opposition; SEATO had been created "to react against 'aggression by means of armed attack.'" Ambassador Brown thought it possible, however, that the "integrity and sovereignty and political independence of Laos may be eventually lost without [the] enemy ever having to resort to that 'aggression by means of armed attack' which is [the] only written basis for SEATO action."

Thus, as the RLG military situation deteriorated, the Communists were using their stick to "beat" the RLG and the US into an international conference, the results of which could only be unfavorable if the military situation remained unchanged. If, then, negotiations were to serve any useful purpose for the US, it "would be well for them to be preceded or accompanied by a reversal in military trends." However, the UK and France shied away from the use of SEATO forces and the neutrals viewed with alarm the prospect of the injection into Laos of Western armed forces and planes.

However, according to Ambassador Brown, there did exist among both the neutrals and the Allies a "large area of agreement" on the fact of a "foreign Communist presence" on the rebel side in the form of Soviet airlift and Viet Minh technicians, advisers, and cadres. Therefore, asked the Ambassador, "why should not RLG openly make this kind of presentation, utilizing . . . factual intelligence already available?" The RLG might



then call for assistance from friendly powers to "equalize" and "compensate for" Communist intervention. Actions like those taken by the Communists could then be carried out. Such actions were as follows:

1. unlimited use of aircraft, including helicopters, for transport purposes;
2. assignment of artillery teams to selected FAL units;
3. introduction of LTAG and PARU teams to work with FAL components to develop "hunter-killer" teams and "to effect [a] general improvement in [the] overall effectiveness" of FAL units for internal security missions in friendly rear areas.
4. the scattering of communication, medical, and psychological warfare specialists throughout FAL ranks;
5. the assignment of command and tactical advisors at "many echelons," with "perhaps a scattering of key [redacted] South Vietnamese] combat cadres";
6. the use of Thai, South Vietnamese, or Philippine engineer units to assist with highway and airfield programs;
7. the expansion of Meo guerrilla warfare units and the initiation of similar programs with other minorities.

The advantages of such courses of action were, as listed by Ambassador Brown:

1. the "stiffening," the increase of capability and morale, of the FAL;
2. reduction of the dangers of escalation, by justifying the RLG appeal as a "meeting tit for tat" of Communist moves;
3. demonstration to the Communists, the allies, and the neutrals that the US would not allow Laos to be conquered by armed force that did not meet the SEATO definition of "aggression by armed attack";
4. initiation of a policy that the British and French would be "particularly hard pressed to oppose," since the policy would be a response to an appeal the premise of which they accepted; and
5. "If, by remote chance, SEATO as an organization would respond to [the] RLG appeal or at least approve individual participation by member countries it would give SEATO a new lease on life."

Ambassador Brown averred that this memorandum was not "a proposal for limited war in [the] expectation that by military means alone [the] RLG can recoup [the]

country." He warned that this proposal might "provoke severe escalation," a risk which the US must weigh. Finally, Ambassador Brown recommended that, the initiation of any of the suggested actions should be preceded by consultation with the allies and, possibly by purposeful advance hints to the USSR of the direction in which the US "may have to head" if the Communist activities in Laos were not scaled down.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1744, 22 Mar 61;  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1567, 23 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, JCS, reported from Bangkok to the Director of the Joint Staff that the military situation in Laos was critical and would become progressively worse unless additional action were taken. The biggest problem, in the opinion of the Deputy Director, was the "lack of determination, will and leadership on [the] part of FAL and Phoumi."

The Deputy Director recommended that Admiral Felt [redacted] go to see Phoumi and lay the entire problem on the line." (See item 29 March.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 220917Z Mar 61.

22 Mar

In view of the increased seriousness of the situation in Laos, CINCPAC established DEFCON 2 for the following forces:

1. All forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF 116 in CINCPAC OPlan 32-59 (Phase II Laos).

2. All US forces earmarked for and in direct support of SEATO Field Forces OPlan 5/61.

3. All US forces earmarked for and in direct support of CINCPAC Outline Plan X-61 (Laos).

CINCPAC established DEFCON 3 for all forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF 116 in CINCPAC OPlan 32-59 (Phase II Viet Nam).

The remainder of the Pacific Command forces were placed in DEFCON 4.

(TS) Msg, DA to CGUSCONARC, DA 992338, 22 Mar 61 (quoting CINCPAC Msg to JCS, DTG 212235Z Mar 61).

22 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that, by this date, the following actions had been taken to implement the approved courses of action (see item 9 March):

1. The Services had been requested to meet the following quotas for helicopter crews: Army, 10 pilots and 10 crew chiefs; Marine Corps, 14 pilots and 20 crew chiefs; Navy, 10 pilots and 20 crew chiefs. (The decision to employ only Marine Corps crews, see item 13 March, had been changed.)

2. [redacted]

3. The 16 USAF pilots needed to man B-26s had been selected.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992354, 22 Mar 61.

23 Mar

The Secretary of State spelled out to Ambassador Brown the details and implications of the proposed Laotian appeals (see item 21 March). It was intended, the Secretary stated, that the Laotians would appeal simultaneously to SEATO for military intervention, and to the UN requesting an emergency Security Council meeting. It was essential that the appeals be simultaneous, the Secretary emphasized, because a SEATO response without an appeal to the UN would result in a request for a Security Council meeting by the USSR or other UN members, causing the initiative in the UN to rest "with others" who would likely introduce a resolution calling for the withdrawal of SEATO troops from Thailand. If military action became necessary in Laos, the Secretary continued, the RLQ should not address its appeals until military preparations were so far advanced within SEATO as to enable the positioning of forces within Laos in "a matter of hours" after the Security Council had received the Laotian appeal. The SEATO moves should not be still in progress during the Security Council meeting because this would place the US in the undesirable position of having to fend off proposals designed to impede the SEATO efforts.

In separate messages, the Secretary of State provided Ambassador Brown with the contemplated texts of the Laotian appeals and of a proposed US resolution to the Security Council, and with a timetable of the anticipated actions. The timetable planned was as follows:

1. D minus an unspecified number of days. Prior decision by those members of SEATO who intend to respond militarily to the Laotian appeal that they will initiate immediate movement of their military forces into Laos upon receipt of the Laotian appeal.

2. H hour. Dispatch of Laotian appeal to SEATO, at which time the movement of military forces into Laos begins.

3. H plus 1 hour. Announcement by the US and other SEATO members that military forces have been dispatched to Laos in response to the Laotian appeal.

4. H plus 1 hour. Dispatch of appeal by Laotians to the Security Council.

5. H plus 12 hours. The SEATO military forces should have taken up their positions in Laos, securing those areas designated.

6. H plus 24 hours. The Security Council meeting would begin; the US would, with other Security Council members, submit a resolution embodying the following provisions:

- (a) A call for the immediate cessation of hostilities in Laos;

(b) A call for the immediate termination of all infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or of other materials across the frontiers of Laos;

(c) An expression of the hope that the International Commission for Supervision and Control of Laos can be convened as soon as possible and that it will be able to verify the effectiveness of the cease-fire;

(d) An endorsement of the convening of an international conference as proposed by the Chief of State of the Kingdom of Cambodia and by the United Kingdom to seek ways to protect the independence, territorial integrity, and neutrality of the Kingdom of Laos;

(e) A call upon all governments concerned to respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and neutrality of Laos; and

(f) A call upon all governments concerned to cooperate fully with the implementation of this resolution.

(TS) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1000, 1026, 1027, 23 Mar 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1025, 24 Mar 61.

23 Mar

President Kennedy announced at a press conference that the situation in Laos was potentially dangerous, and he warned the Communist world that "no one should doubt our resolution" to preserve an independent, neutral Laos. The President declared that if there was to be a peaceful solution to the Laotian crisis, there must be a cessation of the present armed attacks by "externally supported Communists." If the attacks did not stop, the President warned, the US in close cooperation with its allies, and in accordance with the wishes of the Laotian Government, must consider what further response would be required.

"I want to make it clear . . .," he stated, "that all we want in Laos is peace and not war, a truly neutral Government and not a cold war pawn, a settlement concluded at the conference table and not on the battlefield."

(U) NYT, 24 Mar 61, 1; Washington Post, 24 Mar 61, A12.

23 Mar

Ambassador-at-Large Harriman reported to the Secretary of State that he had conferred at New Delhi with Souvanna Phouma (see item 15 March). Souvanna had reiterated to Harriman his familiar theme that Laotians should be left to settle their own problems. Souvanna had claimed that both Kong Le and Pathet Lao troops were loyal to him and would agree to a cease-fire if he requested it.

Souvanna also had stated that the NNC proposal, favored by the US, was not possible since the NNC would have no authority from which to receive instructions. Moreover, according to Souvanna, "Laotian Law [was] tied to [the] Geneva Accords." These Accords linked together the Indo-Chinese countries and "provided [for] the solution their problem simultaneously with

assistance respective ICCs." To Ambassador Harriman's reminder that Souvanna himself had ended the work of the ICC in Laos, Souvanna had rejoined that he had asked for only an adjournment of the ICC--therefore, the ICC was still legally in existence.

In a more general discussion of the Laotian problem, Souvanna had made the following points:

1. He was still the Prime Minister.
2. The weakness of Laos was that only the NLHX was an organized and united party among the political factions.
3. The Laotians were overwhelmingly non-Communist and could be saved from communism if action were taken quickly. Since the time was short, the ICC should be convened immediately; convening the 14-Nation Conference would occasion too great a delay.

Souvanna had repeated to Ambassador Harriman his plan for the solution of the Laotian problem (see items 2 and 14 March). Souvanna also stated that he had not returned to Vientiane because such a return would destroy the support and authority that he required to reunite Laos; he was now traveling around the world to gain support for his plan.

(C) Msg, New Delhi (Harriman) to SecState, 2144, 23 Mar 61.

23 Mar

In an aide-memoire to the USSR, the British Government replied to the Soviet call for reactivation of the ICC (see item 18 February). The British proposed that the Soviet Union and Great Britain issue a request for an immediate cease-fire in Laos. If the Soviet Union concurred in this proposal, the British Government would agree to ask Nehru to convene the ICC in New Delhi. The commission would be instructed to verify the effectiveness of the cease-fire in Laos.

Great Britain also accepted the Soviet proposal for an international conference. The aide-memoire stipulated, however, that the conference should meet only after the ICC had reported that the cease-fire was effective, and it was hoped that would be accomplished within two weeks.

The British declared that the international meeting should be attended by members of the Geneva Conference, and strongly endorsed Sihanouk's suggestion that certain other nations join the meeting.

In conclusion, the note stated that Britain could not recognize the so-called "government of Prince Souvanna Phouma" and that a neutral Laotian Government of national unity would have to be constituted before the conference could reach any decision. Therefore, the British hoped that Laotian leaders would resume the talks that had been started in Phnom Penh. If the new government was not formed by the time the Conference assembled, the RLG could not be represented at the meeting, and the first task of the conference members would be to constitute a new Laotian Government.

(U) NYT, 24 Mar 61, 1, 60.

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23 Mar

CINCPAC reported that the approved augmentation of PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand (approved action 10; see item 9 March) had been completed. The augmentations were as follows: PEO, 27 officers and 34 enlisted men; JUSMAG, 26 officers and 48 enlisted men.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992473, 23 Mar 61.

23-24  
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A C-47 aircraft assigned to the US Air Attache, Vientiane, was shot down over the Plaine des Jarres while performing a reconnaissance mission.

On the follow day, the Directorates of Intelligence and Operations of the Joint Staff, JCS, informed the Secretary of Defense of the circumstances and effectiveness of the aerial reconnaissance conducted by the Air Attache aircraft.

The Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff, cited the 17 December 1960 authorization for these flights (see item). The reconnaissance missions, flown on a regular basis, were with the knowledge of and at the request of the RLG. The Deputy Director stated that the Air Attache, although assigned to Saigon where the aircraft was based, was also accredited to Laos.

The Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff, reported that the reconnaissance flights of the attache aircraft had been of "great intelligence value," providing the "most reliable reports of enemy troop dispositions and movements."

In a country where road travel in many areas is practically impossible, and communications non-existent, ground reconnaissance was nonproductive. Ground reconnaissance even when completed was accomplished mostly by non-American sources of unknown reliability. Until air reconnaissance was started, the employment of government forces against enemy troops was, of necessity, conducted on a reaction basis. Limited Lao Army resources were wasted on operations based on a lack of tactical intelligence or on no intelligence at all.

According to the Director of Intelligence, the reconnaissance flights had particularly revealed the following:

1. Visual and photographic evidence of Soviet planes in Laos.
2. Vehicular movements of military columns from North Viet Nam into Laos.
3. Identification and location of some enemy weapons and deployment.
4. Location of some enemy supply points and ammunition dumps.
5. Location of enemy troop concentrations.
6. Information on the condition of the main roads in Laos and border areas.
7. Location, configuration, and capacity of airfields in Laos.
8. Location of new enemy communication facilities including pinpointing of relay stations and aircraft homing devices.

(TS) Memo, Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff to SecDef, "Reconnaissance by Attache Aircraft in Laos," 24 Mar 61, CJCS 091-Laos (2); (TS) Memo, Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff to SecDef, "Intelligence Value of US Air Attache Aerial Reconnaissance in Laos," J2DM-96-61, 24 Mar 61, CJCS-091-Laos (2); (S) Msgs, USARMA Vientiane to DA; DA IN 96698, 24 Mar 61; DA IN 96746, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that he had informed King Savang of the US plan to propose through the British to the USSR a termination of hostilities (see item 22 March). The King had commented that the termination should not be a case of the government forces disarming themselves and sitting placidly by while the "other side," without shooting, bettered its position. Additionally, the King had declared that a cease-fire would have to involve the removal of the Viet Minh from Laos.

To Ambassador Brown the King had appeared unenthusiastic about the proposed meeting of Laotian leaders to form a widely-based government to represent Laos at the international conference. In this context, the King had particularly insisted that Souvanna "did not represent anything." With regard to the international conference itself, the King had anticipated that the Chinese Communists would attempt to inject the Taiwan dispute into the proceedings and thereby cause the conference to lose sight of the Laotian problem.

King Savang had approved of President Kennedy's 23 March proclamation (see item) and had agreed with Ambassador Brown that military efforts should be continued "with unremitting vigor" during the search for a peaceful solution. The King had been critical, however, of the leadership, tactics, and logistical planning of the FAL.

Savang considered that "Souvanna was cleverly being used by Communists to serve their ends," Brown reported. Souvanna was always inclined to follow the last man who talked to him, the King had averred; therefore, Souvanna's world tour, since its itinerary placed the Communist nations last, was part of "the Communist game."

The King had expressed disappointment, Brown reported, in SEATO's actions to date. If efforts for a peaceful settlement failed, the Laotian Chief of State had declared, the RLG would have no alternative but to call for outside help. If SEATO were disposed to act, the King could see no difficulty in the RLG making the appeal to that organization (see item 23 March).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1755, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar President Kennedy, in a message to Prime Minister Nehru, urged that the Government of India assume a leading role in arranging a cease-fire in Laos and in making arrangements for that country to become a truly neutral nation, free from outside interference.

(U) NYT, 25 Mar 61, 1.

24 Mar The Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi informed Secretary Rusk that Prime Minister Nehru, in two speeches before Parliament, had noted the critical and urgent nature of the Laotian issue on which war or peace depended. Nehru had welcomed the UK proposals for reconvening the ICC and holding an international conference (see item 23 March) and expressed the hope that current efforts would succeed in stopping the fighting and the importation of arms.



Mr. Nehru had also declared, the Charge reported, that there would be no solution to the crisis in Laos unless various parties or groups were represented in the government and a policy barring commitment to any military alliance was followed.

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2183, 28 Mar 61.

24 Mar Ambassador Bruce told the Secretary of State that the British Foreign Office thought that a Laotian Government of national union would be difficult to achieve "at any stage," but that the results might be more satisfactory if the attempt were made now, rather than at the international conference.

The British were also convinced, Ambassador Bruce said, that Souvanna was the only logical person to lead the national union government. Some Pathet Lao would also have to be brought in if the government were going to be acceptable to the Communists.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3862, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar In reply to Prince Sihanouk's 3 March letter (see item), President de Gaulle agreed that the reconvening of the ICC would have been the best way to deal with the Laotian problem. However, since this had not come about, De Gaulle favored a program embracing a cease-fire, an immediate halt in arms shipments, the organization of a truly representative government, and the convocation of a conference.

At the very least, De Gaulle continued, there should be an end to the fighting so that an international conference could undertake its task of finding a "durable solution" to the Laotian problem. Such a solution, he asserted, would confirm the independence, integrity, and neutrality of Laos.

(The French President's reply was not made public until 27 March; Ambassador Gavin reported its contents to the Secretary of State on 28 March.)

(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4068, 28 Mar 61.

24 Mar US Ambassador Hickerson informed the Secretary of State that he had briefed Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano on the current US willingness to accept the cease-fire in Laos to be followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). Serrano had declared, the Ambassador reported, that "we might as well write Laos off." If the Soviets "had any sense," Serrano had stated, they would accept the British proposal and then go on with their infiltration to gain control of a so-called neutral Laos. If the Soviets did not accept the proposal they would repeat the Korean action and get Chinese and North Vietnamese to do their fighting for them in a local war. Serrano was absolutely convinced, however, that the Soviets would not risk a world war over Laos.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1103, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Tokyo informed the Secretary of State that Japan's reaction to the President's proclamation (see item 23 March) was favorable. Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs had declared that the neutralization of Laos was completely in line with Japan's thinking, since it was closely related to cessation of armed assistance and would remove Laos from the cold war struggle.

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2763, 24 Mar 61.

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24 Mar

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(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1724, 23 Mar 61; and Sec State to Bangkok, 1473, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar CINCPAC forwarded to the JCS an outline of CINCPAC OPlan X-61, the operations plan for multinational military operations in Laos. The plan provided for operations in support of RLG forces endeavoring to suppress and defeat Communist-supported insurgent forces. It was based upon a combination of CINCPAC OPlan 32-59 (Phase II-Laos) (see item 16-17 December 1960) and pertinent portions of SEATO Field Forces OPlan 5/61. OPlan X-61 was based upon the following assumptions:

1. The RLG would appeal to SEATO for military assistance.
2. The US, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, and possibly Australia would join in the operations.
3. Entry into Laos would be an administrative movement by friendly forces into key cities to free FAL forces for combat operations.

The plan contained, inter alia, the following provisions:

1. General Situation. Communist-supported insurgent forces were on the offensive and making significant gains toward the key cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; the available FAL force had been committed to the maximum and appeared unable to halt the advance and regain the initiative; external assistance would be required to release FAL forces from key urban areas so that they might be committed to front line combat operations.

2. Friendly Forces.

- a. US forces:

1. Forces committed to the Multinational Task Force (MTF) Laos:

- 3 FMFPAC battalions
- 1 FMFPAC air group
- 1 USARLAC airborne battle group
- 1 PACAF mobile strike force
- 1 USARLAC brigade task force
- US Army logistic command

ii. PACOM forces supporting MTF Laos:

- 2 PACFLT carrier task groups
- PACAF 15th AIRDIV, augmented by 1 F-4E squadron from CONUS.

b. Thai forces:

- i. 2 infantry battalions
- ii. 1 ranger company
- iii. 1 fighter-bomber squadron
- iv. 1/2 transport squadron
- v. 1 regimental combat team

c. Philippine forces:

- i. 1 medical detachment
- ii. 1 engineering company

d. Pakistani forces:

- 1. 1 brigade group
- ii. 1 fighter squadron

e. Australia (if participating):

- i. 1 fighter squadron
- ii. 1 infantry battalion

(The USARLAC brigade task force, the Thai regimental combat team, the Pakistani forces, and the Australian fighter squadron were to be held in reserve and phased in when and if directed by the Commander, MTF (CMTF). If, in addition, British Commonwealth forces were made available subsequent to the implementation of the plan, they too would be placed in reserve.)

3. Mission. To deploy rapidly forces of the US, Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan and possibly Australia to secure and defend key cities in Laos in order to release FAL forces for combat operations against insurgent forces. Be prepared to conduct further military operations as may be directed.

4. Concept of Operations. The MTF would secure key cities including Paksane, Vientiane, and Savannakhet, and the key Mekong River crossings in the vicinity of these cities. Forces would be prepared to deploy to other key areas, such as Luang Prabang, if directed. (The message detailed the deployments of each of the units of the MTF.)

5. Command Arrangements. The Commander of the MTF would be the commander of the US 3rd Marine Division, and he would have a Thai as deputy commander. Component commanders would be provided by the US, and deputy component commanders by the Thais; staff representatives as might be appropriate would be provided by the other participants. The national

integrity of the units would be maintained under national commanders.

6. Logistic Concept. Logistic support would remain a national responsibility under the plan.

7. Reaction Times. The total reaction time for the initial elements of the MTF was four days, under the assumption that the order to execute would be given from DEFCON 2 without prior warning and without the prepositioning of forces. (See item 29 March for JCS action on OPlan X-61.)  
(TS) Msg, Admino CINCPAC to JCS et al., 240658Z Mar 61.

25 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Wellington informed the Secretary of State that she had briefed a senior External Affairs officer on the current US position to accept a cease-fire in Laos, to be followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). A copy of the President's public statement on Laos (see item 23 March) also had been presented.

According to the New Zealand External Affairs officer, both the Prime Minister and the Acting Prime Minister had already been given the substance of the US position. The Acting Prime Minister had sent "instructions" to his representatives in Washington, London, and Bangkok to the following general effect:

1. New Zealand's objections to a SEATO military intervention remained as previously expressed.

2. The general situation, however, had been altered somewhat by US efforts toward a political settlement that had been met by Soviet foot-dragging and stepped-up supply to PL forces.

3. The New Zealand Government estimated that the Soviets did not want a showdown over Laos at the present time.

4. US military plans as described in Washington appeared to be reasonable.

5. US proposals involved a calculated risk but under the circumstances it was probably worth taking.

(C) Msg, Wellington to SecState 407, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Moscow expressed the opinion that negotiations on Laos with the USSR should now be carried on by the British. But to be prepared in the event of a call from Khrushchev, the Ambassador requested guidance concerning the US position on the following.

1. Did the US envisage the continuation of the "favored position" given France by the Geneva Accords?

2. In the event of a cease-fire, was the US prepared to agree to suspension of arms deliveries pending the conclusion of an international conference?

3. How would a broadened RLG participate in the conference be formed?

4. If Souvanna insisted, was the US prepared to accept the participation of the Pathet Lao in such a government?

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In reply, the Secretary of State declared that:

1. The US would strongly support the French initially in efforts to maintain their privileged position, but the Secretary did not see how this position could be maintained if effective arrangements for training Lao security forces by a neutral country "could be" satisfactorily arranged.

2. In the event of a cease-fire, the US was not prepared to agree to the suspension of arms deliveries until effective arrangements for screening all arms deliveries to Laos could be worked out.

3. The US envisaged that the Lao Government would be broadened by conferences among Lao leaders, particularly Souvanna Phouma and the present RLG.

4. Although the US up to this time had consistently rejected PL participation in a "broadened" RLG, it was "conceivable that in [the] context of [a] workable NNC and [a] membership [of] strong anti-Communist elements in the Government" the US would agree to granting the PL one or two minor portfolios.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2279, 25 Mar 61; (S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1587, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador in Moscow commented on Ambassador Brown's 22 March policy recommendations on Laos (see item). Should the Soviets become aware of Brown's suggestion for a "carrot and stick" approach, commented the Ambassador in Moscow, they might reject the British proposal for a cease-fire and an international conference (see item 23 March). And if the Soviets should reject the British note, the steps that Brown had outlined would probably not prevent further deterioration of the military situation, for they would no doubt be offset by increased Soviet and Viet Minh support.

If the Soviet reply proved to be a temporizing one, Thompson continued, the proposed steps might lead the Soviets to think that the West was engaging in a maneuver to stabilize the military situation pending the rainy season.

Finally, Ambassador Thompson pointed out that, if the Soviets should agree to a cease-fire, the "carrot and the stick" approach would obviously be unwise.

(TS) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2277, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Saigon informed the Secretary of State that Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem had reacted favorably to the current US position to accept a cease-fire in Laos, followed by an international conference (see item 22 March).

Diem had expressed the opinion, the US diplomat reported, that the President's public statement on Laos (see item 23 March) was "very good." The Vietnamese President had asserted that it was necessary to "hold firm," and that if the objective of a neutral and non-Communist Laos could not be achieved by negotiation, "we must be ready to act." Diem had also noted that if Laos could not be held, then both Viet Nam and Thailand, as well as Cambodia, would eventually fall to the Communists.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1522, 26 Mar 61.

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25 Mar Ambassador Gavin reported to the Secretary of State that he had conferred with Souvanna Phouma in Paris, presenting to him the current summary of the US position toward Laos.

The US position, according to the summary, remained to support the independence and integrity of Laos as a neutralized state unaligned in its international relations. To insure this objective, the US was attempting to arrange a peaceful settlement of the Laotian question; thus the US had supported the NNC proposal. The US was not opposed in principle to an international conference but was concerned because there appeared to be no mutually acceptable basis for settlement among the proposed conferees. Under these circumstances, the US feared that the Communist intervention might continue despite the convening of the conference. Moreover, the failure of such a conference--a distinct possibility in the view of the US--would increase the likelihood of an enlargement of the conflict. However, if a de facto cease-fire could be arranged in a few days, the US was prepared to agree to the meeting of the ICC and the holding of the 14-Nation Conference. If the Communists did not halt their offensive, however, the US would "consider other measures."

It had furthermore been the constant policy of the US that the non-Communist elements in Laos should be reconciled so that a widely representative RLG might be brought forth. To that end, the US hoped that Souvanna would return to Phnom Penh and resume talks with the Phoumi group; in the US view, Souvanna Phouma had an essential role to play in the salvation of his country.

Souvanna expressed pleasure at the new US position, reported Ambassador Gavin, and stressed that Soviet arms were not being supplied to the Pathet Lao but to the Kong Le forces who were in turn supplying some arms to the Pathet Lao. The Western press reports that the war in Laos was between Communists and anti-Communists were not accurate, according to Souvanna; the Kong Le forces were stronger than the Pathet Lao and had but one goal: the support of Souvanna.

Gavin also reported that the Laotian leader had stated to the British Ambassador that the "greatest single stumbling block to the final solution of the Laotian problem was the US refusal to accept the Pathet Lao in the government."

(S) Msgs, SecState to New Delhi (Harriman), 2579, 21 Mar 61; Paris to SecState, 4021, 25 Mar 61, and 4032, 27 Mar 61.

25 Mar The Chairman, JCS, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, recommended that "the sternest protest" be addressed by the US to the USSR, and perhaps to Red China and Communist Viet Nam, demanding the return, "expeditiously and unmolested," of Major Bailey (the Assistant US Army Attache, Laos, who had been a passenger in the C-47 reported shot down by the Pathet Lao on 23 March 1961; see item).

The Chairman pointed out that the destroyed aircraft was assigned to the Air Attache, Viet Nam, who was at the same time the accredited Air Attache to Laos. The aircraft was "by all the rules of diplomatic procedure" free to fly anywhere in Laos if the RLG approved. Major Bailey was a

properly accredited US representative to the RLG, as was each of the other commissioned members of the crew.

The Chairman recommended further that the protest to the Soviets demand a full report of the circumstances of the incident and of the fate of the other passengers, and the immediate return of any survivors or bodies, as well as the aircraft and its equipment.

The Chairman viewed the consideration of his recommendation by the "highest levels of the US government to be a matter of the greatest urgency," since it could be expected that the Communists were "devising some course of action to exploit the situation" (see item 29 March).

(S) Note by Secys on "US Reaction to C-47 Incident in Laos," JCS 1992/945 (31 March 1961), Laos Special File III, R&RA.

- 25 Mar CINCPAC reported to the JCS that in the past week FAL blocking positions north and south of RJ 7-13 had held against enemy probing attacks. On the southern edge of the Plaine des Jarres FAL units had withdrawn to the vicinity of Tha Thom following an abortive attempt to take the enemy blocking position at Ban Ta Viang.  
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 97367, 26 Mar 61.
- 25 Mar CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC the assignment of RB-26 aircraft to supplement the inadequate tactical air reconnaissance capability available to the PEO.  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 97297, 25 Mar 61.
- 25 Mar CHPEO informed Phoumi that bombs for the T-6s had arrived in Laos and would be kept in PEO custody until released by the US Government. CHPEO reported that Phoumi had been informed of the arrival of the bombs because FAL personnel had discovered that bombs for T-6s were in Laos.  
(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 97217, 25 Mar 61.
- 25 Mar The JCS reported progress to the Secretary on the implementation of the 9 March approved courses of action (see item) as follows:
1. CINCPAC had approved a request by CHPEO to substitute 75-mm pack howitzers for the 105-mm howitzer batteries the Thais were to be asked to provide Laos. The smaller weapons were to be procured from the Republic of China and manned by the FAL.
  2. [REDACTED]
  3. [REDACTED]
- (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992681, 25 Mar 61.
- 26 Mar At a meeting in Key West, President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan agreed that the West's military and political posture must be one that would not encourage the Soviets to think they could succeed in a military take-over of Laos. This posture, including demonstration of a united front at the SEATO Conference, was in turn "intended to facilitate [a] peaceful settlement" leading to a neutral Laos.



The President and Prime Minister also agreed that if it proved impossible to bring the Soviets to the peace table, it should be clear that the West would not accept a Communist take-over in Laos.

(C) Msg, SecState Circular 1478, 28 Mar 61.

26 Mar Ambassador Johnson informed the Secretary of State that the Thais were very bitter about the British proposal to the Soviets calling for an immediate cease-fire followed by an international conference (see item 23 March). The Thai Foreign Minister had referred to it as a "sell out," Johnson reported. Furthermore, in Thai opinion, the Soviets would be "fools" not to accept the proposal. The Thai had liked the President's speech very much, said Johnson, but had felt that it was not consistent with the British approach to the USSR.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1744, 26 Mar 61.

26 Mar In Bangkok for the SEATO conference, Secretary Rusk held conversations with two of the leading Asian representatives to the conference. As reported by the Secretary to the Department of State, SEATO Secretary-General Sarasin, a Thai, stated that the conference must obtain substantial results in order to bolster the courage of the peoples of Southeast Asia. The Thai statesman emphasized the need for unity among the treaty members and expressed the belief that the European members were concentrating on their own regional interests at the expense of Southeast Asian interests.

In another conversation, reported Secretary Rusk, Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano expressed strong opposition to the reconvening of the ICC and the calling of the 14-Nation Conference. The Filipino stated that the strong military position of the PL would cause the USSR to insist that the PL be given either equal or predominant representation in any broadened government. If the other powers were not willing to accept this situation, the Filipino foresaw a divided Laos. Serrano doubted that the UK and France would support combined SEATO military operations in Laos. His instructions were, therefore, to explore these questions: (1) what action could SEATO take if the cease-fire proposals did not succeed? and (2) what capability had SEATO to deter aggression in Southeast Asia? The Filipinos were conducting this exploration with a view to reassessing their security arrangements.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 6, 26 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 5, 26 Mar 61.

26 Mar CHJUSMAG Thailand reported that Marine Air Base Squadron-16 at Udorn was ready to receive and service aircraft. (This completed action on approved course of action 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, DA IN 97556, 26 Mar 61.

27 Mar Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, during a meeting with President Kennedy, indicated that the Soviet Government was aware of the President's great interest in the Laotian "question" and was familiar with the US position regarding it. Gromyko stated that with the prospect of a settlement in the offing, "both sides must now show restraint and take steps to prevent [the] conflict from spreading." His government's reply would come shortly, the Foreign Minister added.

President Kennedy, emphasizing the urgency of a reply, pointed out that a cease-fire was of first importance in order to prevent a further spread of the conflict.

(C) Msg, SecState, Circular 1478, 28 Mar 61.

27 Mar The SEATO Council of Ministers convened in public session at Bangkok. Opening remarks were delivered by the various delegates. Secretary of State Rusk in his presentation attacked the concept that the peoples of Southeast Asia were innocent victims in the struggle between external power blocs; rather, the Secretary stated, these peoples were objects in the path of a would-be aggressor. The Secretary regretted that the meeting was forced to occupy itself primarily with security matters related to Laos and Viet Nam when the more basic purpose of the organization was to assist the peoples of Southeast Asia in the development of their human and material resources. Finally, the Secretary assured his audience that the US would "live up to its responsibilities" and would assist those defending themselves against "armed minorities directed, supplied and supported from without."

(OUO) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 19, 27 Mar 61.

27 Mar Phoui Sananikone stated to a US Embassy officer that the present "dictatorial" government was antagonizing the majority of the population and leading the country rapidly to disaster, and that the King was the only person left in whom the majority of Laotians had confidence. The ex-Premier also stated that, if Laos was to be preserved as a nation, the following political solution should be implemented immediately:

1. The King, after persuading Phoumi and Boun Oum to step down, would designate himself Premier; on his own initiative, the King would select competent, patriotic and reasonable noncontroversial ministers who would satisfy the population's desire for a truly representative government.

2. Upon investiture, the King would renew his appeal for international assistance in achieving a "politico-military solution," and request a 14-nation conference as proposed by Sihanouk. (Phoui hoped a cease-fire could be effected while the conference was still in the organization state.)

3. The National Assembly, after legally investing the King's government, would not be dissolved, but recessed indefinitely. (A standing committee could pass temporarily on necessary laws.)

4. The Government, headed by the King, would remain in office until general elections were held, probably in early 1962.

5. King Savang could remain most of the time in Luang Prabang, delegating to the Vice-Premier the authority to conduct routine affairs. His Majesty could come to Vientiane as the situation dictated.

According to Phoui, the only problem in this proposal lay in persuading the King to request the present government to resign. Although Savang disapproved of the present government, he feared Phoumi, the ex-Premier declared.

From an international viewpoint, Phoui continued, the advantage to a government headed by the King would reside

in the fact that nations such as Cambodia, India, Burma, and France would be obliged to give it full recognition. Although the Communist bloc would undoubtedly quibble over its legality, they would find it hard to maintain recognition of Souvanna's "government" in face of world opinion and the fact that even the Communists had never questioned the King's status. Thus, Phoui stated, a question over Laotian representation at the international conference could not arise (see item 31 March).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1775, 28 Mar 61.

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Secretary Rusk reported to the Department of State the substance of the first closed session of the SEATO Council of Ministers. During this session, reported the Secretary, each of the member nations had expressed its views on the Laotian crisis and SEATO response thereto.

Lord Home, Foreign Minister of the UK, had stated that Laos was fundamentally weak and could not exist without external aid. Noting the meager results of US aid, Lord Home had averred that political stability had to be achieved in Laos and aid channeled through international machinery. The British representative had summarized the steps required, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, to achieve political stability for Laos: agreement on a cease-fire; the reactivation of the ICC; and the convening of the 14-Nation Conference. In addition, Lord Home said that SEATO should refrain from statements or actions that would prejudice such a settlement.

Pakistani Minister of External Affairs Qadir had agreed that SEATO should not so act as to prejudice the desired political settlement, but he had added that SEATO must, on the other hand, make clear that existing obligations would be fulfilled.

Prime Minister Menzies of Australia had supported the idea of a neutral Laos and broached the possibility of a UN guarantee of that neutrality.

Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano had questioned the viability of the Laotian state as a neutral, since the Soviet bloc would not refrain from subversion. He stated also that his government had suggested through diplomatic channels a UN guarantee of the neutrality of Laos but that the suggestion had not yet elicited any reaction.

Prime Minister Holyoake of New Zealand had announced that his government would accept either the ICC or the Neutral Nations Commission to investigate the extent of outside interference in Laos. Holyoake agreed that the Soviets would probably accept the US proposals, but he emphasized that the free world must pursue a policy of boldness and firmness if the Soviets refused the British proposals.

Secretary Rusk had reviewed the recent Laotian past, noting persistent Communist efforts to upset the Geneva Accords, unsatisfactory performance by the Laotians themselves, and "frustrations and mistakes" in US efforts. The Secretary described the US position as a "two-track approach" -- a peaceful solution and, if required, military action. The object of this approach was a neutral Laos, the Secretary continued, "as we understand neutrality, not as the Communists may attempt to define it."

French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville had endorsed the British proposals and stressed the need for patience and determination in the anticipated negotiations. If these negotiations should fail, said the Foreign Minister, each member of SEATO should then consider the situation in order to find the appropriate means to prevent at Communist take-over in Laos.

Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman had concluded the addresses by urging the need for a common and unified SEATO response to the Communist threat noting that such unity had not existed in the past.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 20, 27 Mar 61 and SECTO 24, 28 Mar 61.

27-29  
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Ambassador Stevenson presented to the Secretary of State in a series of messages, his views upon the proposed "stimulation" of appeals by the RLG to SEATO for armed intervention and to the UN requesting a Security Council meeting (see items 21, 23 March). The Ambassador's first point was that the US must be able to tell the Security Council, at the time of its convening to consider the Laotian appeal, that the US would be prepared to withdraw its troops "at a point that will be politically viable." Ambassador Stevenson considered that "unless our statement and our resolution are explicit on when and under what conditions we are prepared to withdraw, we will be in grave trouble at the UN"; the "withdrawal language" would then be forced upon the US at some point in the UN proceedings.

Ambassador Stevenson also urged that further consideration be given to seeking UN political action before the US employed troops in Laos. The establishment of a UN observation group in Laos would more effectively insure the independence and neutrality of that country than the operation of the ICC or the continued presence of US or SEATO forces, according to Stevenson. This action was, moreover, possible under the present UN political climate. The Ambassador presented at length the rationale for this belief, and tactics and resolutions that could be used by the US delegation.

(On 30 March, Acting Secretary Bowles informed Ambassador Stevenson that the Department of State was giving "careful study" to these "thoughtful comments and recommendations.")

(TS) Msgs, New York (USUN) to SecState, 2631 and 2634, 27 Mar 61; 2647 and 2648, 28 Mar 61; 2663 and 2664, 29 Mar 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to USUN New York, 1847, 30 Mar 61.

28 Mar

The Chairman, JCS, informed CINCPAC that, because of the present delicate political situation, "higher authority" wished to avoid the landing of US aircraft in Laos at this time except in an emergency. Accordingly, the US airlift of howitzers and ammunition should end at Bangkok, and CAT aircraft should be used for movement to Seno.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992870, 28 Mar 61.

28 Mar

The Charge d'Affaires in Tokyo told Secretary Rusk that Japanese Foreign Minister Kosaka fully supported the new US/UK proposal calling for an immediate cease-fire, followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). Kosaka also stated that his Government would use all its influence to support a cease-fire and political settlement of the Laotian crisis, the Charge reported.

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2792, 28 Mar 61.

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28 Mar The US Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur reported to Secretary Rusk that in a press interview the Malayan Acting Prime Minister, Razak, had asserted that, should there be any outbreak of war in Laos as a result of foreign intervention, the Malayan Government would not permit the use of its territory as a base for operations.

Malaya wanted a peaceful solution to the Laotian problem, Razak had declared, and his country would support any proposal that would bring peace in Laos, including the 14-Nation Conference proposal.

After the press interview Razak had pointed out to the US Ambassador that he had carefully avoided implying that the British Commonwealth troops now in Malaya could not be moved elsewhere for use in operations in Laos. Only actual operational use of bases was prohibited. Razak explained that, when and if the internal security of Malaya became involved, the defense agreement with the UK would be invoked.

(S) Msgs, Kuala Lumpur to SecState, 486 and 487, 28 Mar 61.

28 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that [REDACTED] C-130 crews had completed refresher training under PACAF and were assembling on Okinawa (approved action 6; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992788, 28 Mar 61.

29 Mar The SEATO Council of Ministers unanimously approved the following resolution:

Consulting together as provided in the Manila Pact, the SEATO Council has noted with grave concern the continued offensive by rebel elements in Laos who are continuing to be supplied and assisted by Communist powers in flagrant disregard of the Geneva Accords.

The Council once more makes it clear that SEATO is a defensive organization with no aggressive intentions and reiterates, in the words of the Treaty 'its desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.'

The Council desires a united, independent and sovereign Laos, free to achieve advancement in ways of its own choosing and not subordinate to any nation or group of nations.

It is believed that these results ought to be achieved through negotiations and cannot be hoped for if the present fighting continues.

The Council notes with approval the present efforts for a cessation of hostilities and for peaceful negotiations to achieve an unaligned and independent Laos.

If these efforts fail, however, and there continues to be an active military attempt to obtain control of Laos, members

of SEATO are prepared, within the terms of the Treaty, to take whatever action may be appropriate in the circumstance.

The Council also noted with concern the efforts of an armed minority, again supported from outside in violation of the Geneva Accords, to destroy the government of Viet-Nam and declared its firm resolve not to acquiesce in any such takeover of that country.

Finally, the Council records its view that the organization should continue to keep developments in Laos and Viet-Nam under urgent and constant review in the light of this resolution.

The resolution as approved differed significantly from the "type of resolution" that Secretary Rusk on 27 March had stated to the Department of State he would attempt to obtain from the meeting. This desired resolution had declared "the firm resolve of the member countries of SEATO not to acquiesce in the overthrow of the Royal Lao Government by these Communist-supported rebels or to countenance the destruction of the territorial integrity of that kingdom." The desired resolution had stated unqualifiedly that "SEATO and its member countries will if necessary take whatever action may be appropriate in the circumstances"; the resolution had continued that "in the meanwhile the SEATO member nations agree each to furnish, in response to such requests as individually may be received from the Royal Lao Government, such defensive materiel and other support as members may deem necessary to support the Royal Lao armed forces in defending the sovereign independence of their country."

Secretary Rusk stated that at the council meeting, despite initial divergences, unanimity had been achieved on a "broadly satisfactory" resolution. The resolution represented widespread satisfaction among the ministers both as to SEATO unity and as to the relation of the resolution to the situation in Laos and to possible negotiations; the resolution was "more than we might have expected a few days ago."

According to the Secretary, the first five paragraphs of the resolution represented the general feeling that the peaceful nature of SEATO should be emphasized and that broad political objectives should be stated. The final three paragraphs represented the firm attitude of the SEATO powers and gave reassurances to the governments and peoples of SEATO members located in the area who considered themselves threatened by the Laotian situation.

The Secretary felt that in the conference as a whole, the US had achieved results "beyond expectations." The Secretary stated that, at the beginning of the conference, the Australians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, and Thais had had suspicions concerning SEATO's usefulness and particular apprehension concerning the formula presented in the UK note to the USSR (see item 22 March). On the other hand, the British and French had feared SEATO commitments unacceptable to them. From all indications, observed by the Secretary,



bilateral and trilateral conferences and discussions had succeeded in "resuscitating" SEATO. The Secretary stated that the passage of the resolution had been the focal point of the conference; this resolution had, at a critical juncture, provided the members opportunity to reassess their obligations to SEATO and commit themselves to its "solemn purposes." Altogether, the conference had been, in the words of a Philippine delegate, the most profitable of all SEATO conferences; but, the Secretary said, it was "only a beginning in the longer and much more difficult processes of keeping SEATO alive, unified and alert to its continued responsibilities."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 17, 27 Mar 61, SECTO 29, 30 Mar 61; (S) Msg, SecState Circular 1489, 29 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 25, 28 Mar 61.

29 Mar Ambassador Thompson suggested to the Secretary of State that part of the Soviet opposition to the NNC and preference for the ICC might be due to the fact that the ICC fitted in with their concept of a "three-bloc world." In view of the US policy on this matter, he continued, it would seem important that the role of the ICC should be confined to verifying a cease-fire in Laos, and that the establishment of a broadened government and control of arms be assigned to the NNC.

Because of the Soviet concept of a three-bloc world, the USSR would resist this strongly, Ambassador Thompson declared. Reiterating his belief that there would be no possibility of establishing an NNC unless India was substituted for Malaya, Thompson suggested that it would be wise to begin now to prepare for such a shift. An alternative to Indian membership on the NNC might be the addition of Burma and Cambodia to the ICC, Thompson concluded.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState 2319, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar The JCS approved CINCPAC's Outline Operation Plan X-61 for planning purposes (see item 24 March), subject to certain modifications. The JCS, stating that speed of execution and "a conspicuous international flavor" were the "paramount" considerations if military operations were directed in Laos, stipulated that the following paragraphs in Plan X-61 be modified as follows:

(1) Mission: Utilizing Asian combat forces integrated with US combat and logistic forces, conduct immediate military operations to ensure that stability and friendly control of Laos by assisting the RLG in eliminating Communist-controlled insurgency while being prepared to assist in maintaining the stability and friendly control of South Viet-Nam.

(2) General Concept.

a. A Multinational Force deploys rapidly to Laos securing certain key cities and crossings over the Mekong River in the vicinity within 48 hours after the order to execute is given. Without reducing the speed of initial US force deployments, all feasible emphasis will be placed on conspicuous utilization of the forces of Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines; and on the adaptation and utilization of SEATO command concepts.

b. After the key cities and the nearby Mekong River crossings are secured, forces will



be prepared for further military operations as directed.

(3) Execution.

a. Deployment times be compressed to the minimum, avoiding slow movement through Thailand. Further prepositioning of forces to be achieved as necessary.

b. Within 48 hours from order to execute or ASAP, deploy following forces into Laos: one airborne battlegroup with support elements; minimum of one Marine BLT; Marine Air Group (-); minimum one Thai infantry battalion; and Pakistani, Philippine, and, if available, Australian forces with size forces and destinations to be determined by [CINCPAC].

c. Within 48 hours deploy PACAF Mobile Strike Force to appropriate bases in Thailand.

d. If not secured initially, appropriate forces be prepared to secure Luang Prabang if an emergency arises threatening Communist capture of the King.

(4) Command Relationships. . . . Command relationships . . . should be modified and adapted as necessary to the end that the SEATO relationships will be achieved with the least practicable delay but with minimum disruption in current planning. [The 'SEATO relationships' were detailed by SEATO Field Forces Plan 5/61. Annex C of that plan stated, in part, that Thailand would provide the commander of the SEATO force; the US, the vice commander. The US Army would provide the commander of the SEATO field force, who would have primary responsibility for the conduct of military operations by SEATO forces in Laos; the Commonwealth Nations would provide the vice commander. Several force and component headquarters and staffs were also provided by Annex C.]

The JCS desired that CINCPAC provide them with the following information as soon as possible:

1. The date that CINCPAC forces would be in optimum position for the most rapid execution of the SEATO or multinational plan.
2. The estimated forces that could be deployed into Laos by unit and number of personnel within 24 hours of order to execute; within 48 hours; within 72 hours.
3. The assistance CINCPAC would require to assure success.

In a later message, the JCS, re-emphasizing the sensitivity of the political developments, cautioned CINCPAC to be "particularly mindful of the necessity for discreet movements." An appeal by the USSR to the UN Security Council based on the presence of SEATO or US "aggressive" forces near Laos and specifically in Thailand could, according to the JCS, destroy the present concept of timing (see item 21 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992897, 29 Mar 61, derived from Dec On JCS 1992/938 (29 Mar 61), Laos-Special File-III, R&RA; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992922, 29 Mar 61; (TS) SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5/61 (12 Jan 61) JCS 9060/3100 (12 Jan 61), R&RA.

29 Mar The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense concerning the CJCS memorandum on the detention of Major Bailey (see item 25 March), related that

the President had read the memorandum and the subject had been discussed by Mr. Parsons, Mr. McGeorge Bundy and Mr. Bohlen. Their consensus was that the United States should play the story in low key because the plane carried photographic equipment, as well as a crew of reconnaissance experts, and was flying over a de facto combat zone. Their feeling was that the United States probably would not gain in world opinion by making a strong protest and that efforts should be devoted to securing Major Bailey's return.

(S) Note by Secys on "US Reaction to C-47 Incident in Laos," JCS 1992/945 (31 March 61), Laos Special File III, R&RA.

29 Mar According to a message from CINCPAC to JCS, Admiral Felt held a meeting with General Phoumi to discuss the Laotian situation (see item 22 March). After giving a briefing of the military situation, the Laotian leader stated that he had two requests: 1) expedite delivery of all material promised to the FAL; and 2) in view of the "Viet Minh invasion in the South," the US intervene overtly in Laos. Admiral Felt assured Phoumi that deliveries of equipment would be expedited. With regard to overt US intervention, however, convincing evidence of overt aggression by the Viet Minh and proof that the Laotians were willing to fight for their country would be necessary. Even if these conditions were met, continued the Admiral, a request for overt US intervention would have to be made through the proper diplomatic channels to the US Government in Washington.

The Admiral then urged Phoumi to go on the offensive. The FAL should not take unnecessary risks, but it was important that the Free World know that the Laotians were fighting for their country.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 98805, 30 Mar 61.

29 Mar The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence made the following estimate of the "Communist military situation in Laos":

1. Strength. 11,000, including the equivalent of 26 light infantry battalions; 30 light infantry companies, 5 artillery batteries, 3 heavy mortar companies; 3 light anti-aircraft companies, and 1 armored car company.

2. Organization. Two distinct types were evolving: well-equipped regular troops, organized up to battalion level, employing "semi-conventional" tactics; and regional or local troops organized up to company level and responsible for local guerrilla activity and security of "liberated" areas.

3. Equipment. Infantry units armed with 60-mm and 81/82-mm mortars, 90-mm rocket launchers, 57-mm and possibly 75-mm recoilless rifles, 7.62-mm and .30 cal light and heavy machine guns, and miscellaneous rifles, submachine guns and carbines. Artillery units had Soviet 85-mm guns and US 105-mm howitzers. Anti-aircraft weapons included .50 cal and Soviet 14.5-mm dual heavy machine guns, and Soviet 37-mm and/or US 40-mm guns. Armored vehicles included US M-8 and

Soviet BTR-40 and BTR-152 armored cars. Estimated total: 12 105-mm howitzers; 8 85-mm guns; 12 120-mm mortars; 12 37-mm/40-mm AAA guns; about 20 armored cars.

4. Composition. Communist forces included several hundred former FAL troops and 3,000 hard-core Pathet Lao guerrillas. The remainder, recruited since August 1960, were relatively untrained. At least 500 North Vietnamese cadres, advisors and technicians, including heavy weapons teams, provided stiffening.

5. Logistics. The Communists were largely dependent on supplies from North Viet Nam, supplied by truck convoy over Route 7 and airlift to the Plaine des Jarres and by infiltration overland elsewhere. Daily deliveries to the Plaine des Jarres were estimated at 40 tons by air and 50 tons by road, with an accumulated stockpile of approximately 2,600 tons by 15 March. These supplies were estimated to be adequate to support all forces for 65 days of full combat.

6. Capabilities. The Communists were estimated to be capable of attacking Luang Prabang or Vientiane with up to six battalions, but their success would be "largely dependent on will-to-fight of friendly forces."

(S) Msg, ACSI to CGUSCONARC, DA 992946, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar Minister Barbour informed the Department of State of the UK position the impending discussions with Souvanna Phouma (see item 31 March). The British considered that Souvanna's position was precarious; he did not control the Pathet Lao and he was not condoned by the Phoumi forces. In the British view, Souvanna's significance lay in his position between right and left where he could maneuver for the support of both. Should Souvanna become committed to either force, he would lose his power.

At the meeting with Souvanna the British intended to suggest to him that PL participation in the Laotian Government be limited to two insignificant cabinet posts in order to avoid the danger of a "Czech-type takeover." The British would also suggest to Souvanna that a considerable span of time would be required to re-establish the authority of the Laotian Government over the country as well as for Souvanna to organize support for himself. Therefore, the British would urge, Souvanna should work to postpone elections for at least one year.

The UK would warn Souvanna not to be "taken in" by the USSR and not to include Peking or Hanoi in his itinerary. Finally, the British would not encourage Souvanna to form a new government at this time.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3942, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that thirteen helicopters (approved action 2; see item 9 March) had arrived at Udorn. The fourteenth helicopter authorized by the directive had remained at Don Muang, Thailand, because of mechanical difficulties.

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, DA IN 98396, 29 Mar 61.

30 Mar In response to a directive from the President, the Secretary of Defense submitted the following tabulation of military and economic assistance furnished to Laos.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Military</u>	<u>Economic</u>
1955	\$ -- (Millions)	\$28.4 (Millions)
1956	27.4	36.6
1957	4.3	47.9
1958	5.4	36.3
1959	7.5	23.2
1960	13.4	31.8
1961 (1 Jul-31 Dec 60)	5.4	9.9
	\$63.4	\$214.1

The data given above was compiled from reports of normal operations of the Mutual Security Program and do not reflect emergency assistance given since August 1960.

(C) Memo, SecDef to White House Def Liaison Officer, 30 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

30-31 Mar According to a report from the USAF, eight B-26s had departed the continental US for Okinawa where they would be delivered to volunteer USAF crews for further flight to Thailand (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993224, 1 Apr 61.

31 Mar The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that he was encouraged by recent messages from Vientiane (see items 28, 31 March); they appeared to indicate an increasing awareness among Lao leaders that a new, more representative RLG must be created.

It was clear, the Secretary said, that the continued existence of two governments would prove an "insuperable handicap" to any political settlement and might eventually lead to a divided country--a solution the US believed to be inherently unstable and one that favored the Communists in the long run.

At the moment, Secretary Rusk said, the situation appeared to be that: 1) the present RLG was unable to win, either at home or abroad; the support needed to reunify the country; 2) the PL was in a position to demand participation in the government; 3) Souvanna, the only mediator between the two factions, apparently would not enter the RLG unless the PL were included; and 4) pressures for early elections would increase.

Secretary Rusk declared that the US continued to believe that inclusion of the PL now, at a time when they probably wielded considerable influence in the countryside and when non-Communist leadership was divided and disorganized, would be a dangerous course. For the same reasons, the US considered that early elections would be equally dangerous. On the other hand, Rusk continued, the US recognized that refusal to include the PL might lead only to a protraction of the present conflict; and, given the present military situation, refusal could lead eventually to a de facto division of the country. Therein, the Secretary said, "lies the difficulty."

In view of these considerations, renewed suggestions made in Vientiane, particularly by Phoui (see item 28 March), that the King head a new government had evoked interest in the US. If such a government were created, broadly based and composed perhaps of former Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers, it should acquire considerable status both in and out of Laos. It might be necessary, Rusk conceded, for the US to recognize that both Boun Oum and Phoumi might have to step down in order to keep the PL out. Phoumi might then hold only the position of FAL Commander in Chief.

The government, said the Secretary, could be labeled "provisional," with a declared limited objective of restoring political stability through return to constitutional processes. Souvanna could be offered a major portfolio and might accept it if he was convinced that the provisional government was the first step toward the reunification of the country. Elections for the National Assembly might then be deferred until the country was calm again--in perhaps one year. Once the elections were held, the Secretary declared, the provisional government would resign and a new government based on a new assembly could be invested.

The Secretary of State recognized the force of Brown's previous arguments against a royal government but pointed out that the alternative courses appeared equally perilous. Therefore, the Secretary requested the Ambassador's assessment of the following questions:

1. What were the prospects for setting up a new government under the King and how much pressure from the US would be required to establish it?
  2. If in Brown's judgment such a government could be brought about, how should Souvanna be invited to participate?
  3. If a Royal Government was not feasible, was there any other course that would permit the maintenance of a non-Communist RLG without PL participation or the holding of general elections?
  4. Did the idea of a federal system have any merit?
- (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1053, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Minister Barbour informed the Secretary of State of the results of Souvanna Phouma's discussions with the British (see item 29 March), as reported to Barbour by a Foreign Office official. The British had been impressed by Souvanna and encouraged by his attitude. They believed that Souvanna was "uniquely" the individual who could help to bring about a political settlement and lead a neutral Laos.

Souvanna had told the British that he approved of their proposals to the Soviets (see item 23 March) and had informed Prince Souphanouvong of this approval. Souvanna had said that he would call upon his supporters (i.e., the Kong Le forces) to support the cease-fire when it was called by the Geneva Co-Chairman, but he was concerned that delays between the cease-fire, the establishment of the ICC, and the 14-Nation Conference would allow Phoumi to improve his position. The British had assured Souvanna that they understood that, as soon as the cease-fire was called, India would place the ICC machinery in action "almost at once" and

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that the 14-Nation Conference could be convened in a short time.

According to the British, Souvanna had seemed to appreciate the desirability of limiting the Pathet Lao representation in the Laotian government to "non-key" cabinet posts. Moreover, despite his reported over-confidence, Souvanna had been impressed with the British suggestion that he delay seeking elections in order to consolidate his position.

Souvanna had told the British, with regard to the proposed NNC, that he could agree to the participation of Cambodia and Burma, but objected to Malaya because it would not be a participant in the 14-Nation Conference. The British regarded this attitude, according to Barbour, as "not unreasonable."

The British Foreign Office official reporting these conversations to the US Embassy, stated that if the US would give Souvanna the backing it had given Phoumi, Souvanna "would respond well."

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3980, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of a conversation that had taken place between King Savang Vathana and the British Ambassador to Laos. King Savang had told the British diplomat that he "wholly approved and supported" the British proposal to the Soviets, calling for a cease-fire followed by an international conference (see item 23 March). Savang had indicated agreement that a cease-fire was the first requirement. Also, the British diplomat had asked the King if he had been giving any thought to a reorganized government, which might represent Laos at a conference. King Savang had replied tersely that the only way to arrive at such a government was to include the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1797, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that all but 17 of the helicopter pilots and crew chiefs ~~had arrived in Bangkok.~~ The remainder, all Marines, were en route and were expected in Bangkok by 3 April (approved action 3; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993098, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Somsanith and Ngon Sananikone had informed a US Embassy officer that their views on the future of the National Assembly under a Cabinet headed by the King, differed widely from those of Phoui (see item 27 March). The two Laotians were convinced that following the King's investiture the Assembly must be dissolved, not merely recessed. A constituent assembly then would be formed for the task of drawing up a new constitution that would grant greater powers to the executive. The time gained thereby would enable the RLG to regain control of the country. It would also allow time for an international conference to get under way and for the achievement a cease-fire.

The initial composition of the King's cabinet would be limited to 8 or 10 competent "veteran" ministers, including Souvanna, if he responded to the King's invitation, Ngon had said. After the cease-fire, the King would invite Souphanouvong and possibly one other NLHX leader to join the cabinet, and he might add one or two additional experienced conservatives.

Both men had been emphatic that elections should not be held for a minimum of one year, and perhaps not for 18 months. The Communists, they asserted, could win "hands

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down" if elections took place sooner.

(For reactions of the Secretary of State, see item 31 March.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1796, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar

[REDACTED]

31 Mar The CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC that replacement T-6s not be provided to the FAL because of the ineffectiveness of the aircraft in the present operation.

According to CHPEO, the FAL had 5 of the original 10 T-6 aircraft left. Seven qualified T-6 pilots were available, and three more had been scheduled to complete training in Thailand on 28 March.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 99585, 1 Apr 61.

31 Mar After noting the observations contained in General T.J.H. Trapnell's "Report on Laos," the JCS submitted to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum containing their actions, comments, and recommendations on the report.

The Trapnell Report, transmitted to the JCS upon General Trapnell's return from an inspection tour of Laos (see item 14 March), contained the following observations:

1. As a military theater of operations, Laos provided limited areas in which conventionally organized regiments and battalions could operate effectively in a normal combat role.

2. Laos was "made to order" for guerrilla warfare.

3. The primary factor contributing to the Pathet Lao successes was the existence of Viet Minh advisors as "stiffeners" in Pathet Lao units down to company and lower levels. Otherwise, the Pathet Lao was composed essentially of the "same kind of people" as made up the FAL.

4. Phoumi's plan for retaking the Plaine des Jarres by 1 May was unrealistic. Phoumi could not retake the Plaine des Jarres before June without bombing. It was not certain that Phoumi could retake the plain before June even with bombing. In any event, the Plaine des Jarres should be eliminated as a Pathet Lao military base.

5. In order to provide a reserve to follow up a successful attack on the Pathet Lao, two regiments of the Royal Thai Army should be alerted for helicopter lift. All available B-26s should also be available to participate in this operation.

6. PEO personnel, by operating in civilian clothing, experienced certain morale and disciplinary difficulties and also failed to establish maximum rapport with the un-informed units to which they were accredited.



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7. The desirability and feasibility of stepped-up unconventional warfare activities against the Pathet Lao was evident.

8. Army helicopters were "as natural for this country as guerrilla warfare."

9. Funds had been diverted from US-supported units to at least six non-US-supported battalions, resulting in "barefoot, unpaid, underfed, disgruntled soldiers" in the FAL.

10. The FAL force ceiling should be raised again to permit rotation of FAL battalions for retraining.

11. Neither the FAL nor the PEO had adequate intelligence and counter-intelligence assets and capabilities.

12. The FAL logistics staffs lacked the capability either to plan properly or to execute logistic missions required by the FAL combat units.

13. FAL training, other than that conducted by LTAGs, was nonstandard, widely varying as to quality and content, and sometimes not completed prior to the commitment of trainees to active operations.

14. An intensification of US and RLG propaganda was necessary to counter Communist efforts, to rally the population behind the government, and to subvert the Pathet Lao.

The memorandum detailing to the Secretary of Defense the JCS actions, recommendations, and comments, clearly indicated the importance the JCS attributed to General Trapnell's Report.

Trapnell had recommended the employment of 16 B-26s (or the number available if the situation deteriorated) to bomb military targets on the Plaine des Jarres; he had suggested further that there be no restrictions on the use of conventional air weapons, including napalm, and that these planes not be employed in the role of close support. The JCS approved this recommendation, commenting that its substance had been proposed by them in previous memoranda. They pointed out, however, that the B-26 could be "an excellent close support aircraft provided that adequate ground control personnel are available." The Secretary of Defense was requested to initiate such further actions as might be required to carry out the recommendation.

The JCS also expressed their approval of General Trapnell's recommendation that the PEO be converted to a MAAG, but conceded that such action was "dependent upon the clearing away of certain political obstacles." The JCS requested that, if this conversion could not be achieved in the near future, the Secretary implement an alternative recommendation of General Trapnell--that PEO personnel be authorized to wear US military uniforms.

The JCS reported that five of the recommendations by General Trapnell had been forwarded to CINCPAC for his comments and recommendations thereon, inasmuch as his responsibilities were directly affected and his views were

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therefore, "a necessary prerequisite for a final decision." These five Trapnell recommendations were that:

1. US advisors should be placed down to FAL battalion level and additional [REDACTED] personnel should be integrated into the advisory group for placement from company down to squad level.
2. Helicopters should be armed to provide close support and armed reconnaissance.
3. PEO should be provided an organic intelligence production and counterintelligence capability.
4. Authorization should be granted for US support of nine additional FAL battalions.
5. A Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) should be established to wage an unconventional warfare and psychological warfare campaign.

Finally, the JCS informed the Secretary that two of General Trapnell's recommendations had appeared to be "susceptible to resolution by CINCPAC with or without assistance":

1) [REDACTED]

2) PEO advisors should be placed with key staff counterparts at FAL headquarters, particularly in logistical positions.

Accordingly, these two recommendations had been referred to CINCPAC with the request that he take such action as he deemed appropriate, "advising the Joint Chief of Staff of the action taken, and of his requirements for further assistance in such action."

[The Trapnell Report in its original form had included an additional recommendation that the US Ambassador to Laos be replaced. The Chairman had ordered this paragraph deleted when the report was "turned green." Advising the Joint Chiefs of this action and providing them with copies of the original report, the Chairman stated that he had taken this action because of the sensitivity of the recommendation and because he believed that the Chiefs could deal with it "amongst ourselves without the necessity of broad staffing." His action, said the Chairman, allowed "a full distribution for staff work on the reports without disseminating so widely" this recommendation.]

(TS) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Laos," JCSM-206-61, 31 Mar 61, derived from (TS) Dec on JCS 1992/943, "Report by J-5 on 'Report on Laos,'" 31 Mar 61, -Laos Special File IV, R&RA; (TS) Note by Secys to JCS on "Report on Laos," JCS 1992/936, 28 Mar 61, Laos Special File III, R&RA; (TS) Memo, CJCS to JCS, "General Trapnell's Report on Laos and Viet-Nam," CM-159-61, 28 Mar 61, CJCS-091-Laos (2).

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,  
THIRD INSTALLMENT: 1 APRIL TO 31 MAY 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION  
JOINT SECRETARIAT  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
2 AUGUST 1961

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- 1 Apr The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that arms had been delivered for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo directed to be armed by the 9 March decision (see item).  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993224, 1 Apr 61.
- 1 Apr US Ambassador to the USSR Llewellyn Thompson transmitted to the Secretary of State a copy of the text of an aide-memoire on Laos handed him by Khrushchev. The original of this aide-memoire had been addressed to the British Government in response to their aide-memoire of 23 March (see item).
- The Soviets, after expressing satisfaction with the willingness of the British Government to agree to the convening of an international conference on Laos, proposed that such a meeting convene at the beginning of April.
- The Soviet Government also agreed with the British proposal that the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference appeal for a cease-fire in Laos. In addition, the Soviets agreed to a British proposal that the ICC should be convened for "observation and control in Laos." As soon as possible, therefore, the ICC should meet in New Delhi and prepare a report for the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference. Renewed activity by the ICC should not, however, delay holding of the proposed international conference on Laos.
- In response to the earlier British reference to the need to solve the "question of [a] neutral government of national unity in Laos," the Soviet Government pointed out that such a regime existed in the "legal government of . . . Souvanna Phouma." The Soviet Government would, however, "regard with sympathy" negotiations among Laotian political factions "for strengthening [the] national unity of [the] country." If the "necessary agreement" among the political factions could not be reached before the convening of the proposed international conference, "the Soviet Government does not exclude that" the Conference would render "help to [the] Laotians in reaching agreement."  
(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2358, 1 Apr 61.
- 1 Apr The JCS Laos Situation Report reported the fall of Tha Thom, the FAL base of operations on the southern approach to the Plaine des Jarres, to a Pathet Lao attack. The FAL withdrawal had been "completely uncontrolled." (However, the enemy did not follow up his advantage, and the Government troops were able to reassemble at Ban Nam Gap, some 10 miles south of Tha Thom. Control over these troops was re-established on 4 April.)  
(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 87-61 to 90-61, 1-4 Apr 61.
- 2 Apr CINCPAC cabled to the JCS a lengthy "appreciation" of the recently concluded SEATO Conference (see item 29 March). According to CINCPAC, SEATO had "stood trial," and had come through "with a meeting of minds." The SEATO Council resolution represented the unity thus preserved. Also, it made clear, according to CINCPAC, that consultations would continue, that SEATO harbored no aggressive intention, and that SEATO might take military action if the Communists did not desist from their attempt to capture Laos by force of arms.

All SEATO military advisers had agreed, stated CINCPAC, that SEATO Plan 5 was "a good plan, adequate for the situation as it exists today and flexible enough to be executed in its entirety or in part." Concerning the force commitments in support of the plan, CINCPAC supplied a country-by-country analysis, as follows:

1. CINCPAC had felt at the beginning of the conference that the UK was reluctant to commit its combat forces and desired to limit its role to moral and logistical support. Had this tendency developed into a fixed UK position, Australia and New Zealand would have been "in a box," since the Commonwealth Brigade at Malaya comprised the joint military commitment of the three Commonwealth nations to SEATO Plan 5; the withholding of the UK contingents of the Brigade would have rendered politically difficult the deployment of the Australian and New Zealand contingents to Laos. However, CINCPAC reported, the US, Australian, and New Zealand military advisers had worked in concert and separately upon the UK adviser. The spirit of unanimity prevailing in the Council of Ministers had apparently had its effect also. For CINCPAC could now say "with some assurance" that the UK/Australian/New Zealand contribution to Plan 5 could be counted upon.

2. The French position was not "obstructionist," CINCPAC reported. Their commitment to Plan 5 was conditioned, however, upon their ability to transport troops from France and Africa to Laos; French forces, therefore, were committed to the reserve force of Plan 5.

3. CINCPAC believed that a Pakistani commitment of one battalion could be counted on, if the US would supply the necessary airlift. The remainder of the Pakistani forces, one fighter squadron and one brigade group (-), should be held in reserve.

4. The Philippines could be persuaded to contribute a battalion, CINCPAC stated, but the US would have to supply both airlift and logistical support. The current Philippine commitment, one medical unit and one engineer company, also contingent upon US lift and support, was sufficient.

5. Thai participation was a foregone conclusion and would probably increase "naturally" as events unfolded.

The actual commitment of all these forces remained dependent upon a unanimous political decision by the SEATO nations--a decision had not yet been made. Secretary Rusk had suggested to the Council of Ministers that the Council Representatives "be instructed in such a manner that the political assumptions necessary to implement Plan 5 be taken immediately" (see item 13 April). Further, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia had suggested, CINCPAC reported, that the US Military Adviser to SEATO (CINCPAC) alter Plan 5 as he thought necessary and then call a special military advisers' meeting to obtain approval of the change and to prod the Council of Ministers into "quick consultation" and

a "SEATO decision to act." CINCPAC had already begun to review and alter SEATO Field Force Plan 5; he intended to present his recommended changes directly to the various military advisers, as well as through the normal SEATO Council channels.

CINCPAC stated his conviction that SEATO Field Force Plan 5 was the "best basis for multi-national action." Accordingly, he was planning to put CINCPAC OPlan X-61 (see items 24 and 29 March) "on ice." However, CINCPAC stated, tactical flexibility must be maintained to cope with the fluid situation in Laos; CINCPAC would preposition units only as events unfolded. The SEATO Field Force Command must, moreover, become as well organized as the JTF 116 had been.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 020330Z Apr 61.

2 Apr

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Admiral Felt, in his talks with Phoumi (see item 29 March), had taken up the question of possible collaboration between the FAL and South Viet Nam against Communist units in Southern Laos. Phoumi had replied that he had no objection in principle to such activities. In a subsequent talk with CHPEO Phoumi stated that he had an agreement with South Viet Nam under which one South Vietnamese division would enter Laos to assist the RLG in the event such intervention was required.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1803, 2 Apr 61.

3 Apr

The US Ambassador to Laos responded to questions put to him by the Secretary of State concerning reorganization of the Royal Laotian Government (see item 31 March). To be of any value in the existing situation, said the Ambassador, a new Laotian Government "must have a reasonable chance of being acceptable to both sides and eliminating the Souvanna 'government.'" Three types of governments would meet the terms of reference (no Pathet Lao and no early elections) laid down by the Secretary of State: 1) a caretaker government of non-political figures under the King; 2) a government of former prime ministers and established personalities, including Souvanna but not Boum Oum or Phoumi either with or without the King as prime minister; and 3) a government of second-line political figures representing the Souvanna and Phoumi groups, either with or without the King as prime minister.

Of the three alternatives, the Ambassador preferred the last on the ground that it would provide a greater level of competence than the existing Government. On the other hand, it would be the most difficult to achieve because of its lack of appeal to the Soviets and Souvanna.

Both the other two alternatives, in the Ambassador's opinion, had serious drawbacks: the first would have little influence and its mandate would probably be to prepare for elections as soon as possible; the second, as a repudiation of Phoumi and Boun Oum would have serious repercussions on the morale and leadership of the FAL.

In response to the specific questions put to him by the Secretary of State, the Ambassador replied as follows:



1. There was a chance that the King might head a government, but heavy US pressure would be required to persuade him to do so.

2. Souvanna might be invited to participate in a royal government by the French, but a responsible US representative should talk to him as well.

3. A federal system would be unworkable because of a lack of trained personnel and would lead to a de facto partition of the country.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1806, 3 Apr 61.

3 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, US Ambassador Johnson said that he and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman had briefly discussed the Soviet reply to the British proposal for a solution of the crisis in Laos (see item 1 April). Thanat had informed the Ambassador of Prime Minister Sarit's concern over the deteriorating military situation in Laos, and of Sarit's concern about going into a conference under these circumstances. Ambassador Johnson replied that the US also was worried about Phoumi's "passive defensive" posture and the seriousness of the Pathet Lao's victories in Laos. He told Thanat that the US had repeatedly called upon Phoumi to undertake, at least, some tactical offensive movements. Furthermore, Ambassador Johnson declared, the 1 April Soviet response to the British appeal had now increased the urgency of some offensive measures. In response to Ambassador Johnson's strong recommendation, Thanat had agreed to recommend to the Prime Minister that he send a message to Phoumi on the subject immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1784, 3 Apr 61.

3 Apr

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the courses of action approved on 9 March (see item):

1. The delivery of arms "sufficient" for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo tribesmen (see item 1 April) had not made those 3,800 tribesmen effective fighting forces, inasmuch as resupply was included in the armament totals. [REDACTED] 3,200 Meo had been armed by these deliveries. A plan had been prepared for the arming of a fifth thousand; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Not included in this 5,000 total were 1,500 Meo previously armed by PEO [REDACTED])

2. Four C-130 aircraft were now [REDACTED] at Takhli. Two crews were in place and two more crews were on 36-hour call, an arrangement in accordance, the JCS stated, with the requirements established by the Joint Operational Center (JOC) (approved action 5).

3. The Joint Operational Command had set a 10-plane requirement [REDACTED] and a 15-plane requirement for "all-out" operations. [REDACTED] 12 planes on hand and, by agreement with the JOC, had three more "on call" (approved action 7).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993269, 3 Apr 61.

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3 Apr

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In a circular message to US diplomatic Missions, the Secretary of State issued guidance and instructions for action intended to "achieve complete coordination at all stages preparatory to [the] possible convening of [a] 14-nation conference on Laos."

The Secretary noted that the Soviet reply to the British proposal of a solution to the Laos situation (see item 1 April), by agreeing to issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen, implied "assent to our essential conditions, namely cessation of hostilities." The Soviet reply, however, called for the reconvening of the ICC, negotiations between the Laotian factions aimed at "strengthening [the] national unity of the country," and the convocation of an international conference, in addition to a cease-fire. The various procedures were proposed, moreover, without reference to timing.

The US position with regard to the Soviet proposals was that an observable and verifiable de facto cease-fire would be a prerequisite to US participation in an international conference. The US should, therefore, be prepared to "carry out stiff measures required [to] redress [the] situation militarily if [a] de facto cease-fire is not effective."

The US hoped that the sequence of events leading to an international conference would be as follows: 1) issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen; 2) reactivation of the ICC in New Delhi; 3) entry of the ICC into Laos to observe the cease-fire; 4) negotiations between the FAL and the Pathet Lao on details of a cease-fire once it had been accepted in principle; and 5) resumption of talks between the Laotian Government and Souvanna aimed at creating a "broader" government to represent Laos at the international conference.

Recognizing that the cooperation of the Laotian Government was of "paramount importance," the Secretary recommended to the US Ambassador to Laos that he explain the US position as described above to Phoumi and the King and request their endorsement of it. The Ambassador was also to emphasize to Phoumi the necessity for maintaining a strong military posture so that the RLQ would not come to the conference table in a weak position to negotiate.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1510, 3 Apr 61.

4 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had explained to Phoumi in detail the timetable and procedural steps involved in achieving a cease-fire and international conference (see item 3 April).

At a press conference later in the day, reported the US Ambassador, Phoumi had 1) expressed approval of the UK/USSR efforts to achieve a cease-fire, 2) stated that an international conference was desirable "to control [the] cease-fire and guarantee Lao neutrality," and 3) expressed willingness to meet any Lao leader for the purpose of forming a "representative union government within [the] framework [of the] constitution and present laws."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1812, 1815, 4 Apr 61.

4 Apr

Ambassador Brown, stating his belief that the next few days might see an acceleration of enemy efforts to secure key terrain in Laos, requested as a matter of "utmost urgency" that a US RT-33 be authorized to perform reconnaissance over Laos. The flights would have to originate from Thailand, said Brown, since no Laotian airfield could accommodate the RT-33. The need was so pressing however, according to Ambassador Brown, that "such niceties as accreditation" to the Bangkok attache were "somewhat irrelevant."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1811 and 1814,  
4 Apr 61.

4 Apr

CINCPAC supplied to the JCS his comments upon General Trapnell's recommendations (see item 31 March), as follows:

1. CINCPAC concurred in the recommended bombing of the Plaine des Jarres, stating that the strike priorities should be: first, supply dumps, convoys, and transport; and second, heavy weapons, troop concentrations, and command posts.

2.

3. The desirability of converting the PEO to a MAAG was concurred in by CINCPAC.

4. Although CHPEO had US authority and RLG permission to place advisors at the battalion level, it had not been possible to place US advisors at a lower level than the group mobile, because of the reluctance of FAL field commanders to have their shortcomings exposed. When and if this disinclination could be overcome, CINCPAC stated, advisors should be placed down to the company level, where "stiffening" would be most effective.

5. Although CINCPAC did not reject the use of armed helicopters for reconnaissance and air support, he believed that these craft could be more advantageously used as utility aircraft. Moreover, CINCPAC's Army advisers had stated that the development of armed helicopter techniques were still in a "highly experimental stage" and not ready for effective operational use.

6. CHPEO was progressing, CINCPAC reported, in placing PEO advisors on FAL staffs.

7. CHPEO would continue efforts to improve PEO intelligence capability and would, according to CINCPAC, make further recommendations "appropriate to developing situations."

8. CINCPAC reported that, of the nine additional battalions for which General Trapnell had recommended US support, seven were already in being, and CHPEO had recommended to Trapnell that their support be authorized. CINCPAC surmised that Trapnell had added two battalions to increase flexibility in training and rotation. However, CINCPAC continued, there was no

known plan for activating more than seven. The support of these seven had been requested by Phoumi in a letter to CHPEO requesting an increase in the FAL troop ceiling from 62,322 to 70,616, to cover the following requirements:

6 special battalions	2,520
1 paratroop battalion	800
replacements undergoing training	1,654
service troops	<u>3,320</u>
Total	8,294

CINCPAC and CHPEO recommended that the service troops authorization be reduced to 982 and that the modified increase of 5,956 be approved, at an estimated cost for May and June of \$652,000.

9. With regard to the establishment of a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) CINCPAC, presuming this to be a long-range measure not directly connected to the immediate problem of retaking the Plaine des Jarres, concurred in Trapnell's recommendation provided that the priority placed upon such a project would not be higher than that assigned to other recommendations.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 042325Z Apr 61.

4 Apr

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the development of the 9 March approved courses of action (see item):

1. In view of the current political situation permission to fly USAF transport aircraft into Laos must in the future receive the prior approval of the President (approved action 8).

2. Action had been completed on the supply of artillery batteries by the delivery to Bangkok of the 75mm pack howitzers to be manned by FAL personnel (approved action 9).

3. The Secretary of Defense had ordered, on the previous day, that the two reconnaissance-configured B-26s (approved action 11, see item 13 March) be moved to Thailand as soon as possible.

4. 

5. In addition to the 17 approved courses of action, the Secretary of Defense had ordered that the Department of State be requested to secure the approval of the RTG for the initiation from Thailand of B-26 operations over Laos (action 18, added to the project on this date).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC. JCS 993343. 4 Apr 61.

5 Apr

The JCS informed the Secretary of Defense of the progress on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March):

1. [REDACTED] arming of at least 3,500 Meo tribesmen, in addition to the 1,500 previously armed by PEO. [REDACTED] the arming of a sixth thousand; the supplies were available for this arming (approved action 1).

2. [REDACTED]

(approved action 3).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993426, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr

The British Ambassador to the USSR delivered to the Soviet Deputy Minister Responsible for Southeast Asia the draft texts of 1) an appeal for a cease-fire in Laos, 2) a request to Nehru that he convene the ICC, and 3) an invitation to 12 nations to participate in a conference on Laos. (Fourteen nations would participate, but the UK and USSR, as co-Chairmen, would not have to invite themselves.) The position of the British Government, as expressed in the draft texts and modified orally in accordance with instructions by the Foreign Secretary, was as follows:

1. The Foreign Secretaries of the United Kingdom and the USSR, acting as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, should call for a cease-fire in Laos. As a practical first step, "emissaries appointed by the authorities in Vientiane and Xieng Khouang" should meet at an agreed-upon time and place to formulate orders to be issued to the troops under their respective control.

2. The co-Chairmen should also request the Prime Minister of India to arrange for the reassembly at New Delhi of the International Control Commission. The purpose of the reconvened Commission should be to report to the co-Chairmen when, in the opinion of the Commission, the cease-fire in Laos was fully effective.

3. The co-Chairmen were to issue an invitation to the governments of Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, France, India, Laos, North Viet Nam, Poland, South Viet Nam, Thailand, and the US to attend a conference "on the permanent settlement of the Laotian question." The British Government announced it would be willing to begin the Conference on 24 April, but, because of the royal funeral in Laos scheduled to start the day before, preferred that the Conference start on 2 May. (See item 1 April for the Soviet recommendation on the opening date of the conference.) As to the Conference site, the British were opposed to Phnom Penh because of the lack of the necessary facilities. They preferred New Delhi but were willing to accept Geneva.

The British stated that, while they were willing to issue these appeals and invitations simultaneously, they would not consent to the holding of a conference until the cease-fire had become effective.

(S) Msgs, SecState, Circulars, 1521, CG-860, and 1533, 5, 6 and 7 Apr 61.

5 Apr In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos proposed specific measures to achieve a new and broadened RLG. These measures were as follows:

1. The King would summon a special session of of the National Assembly and call on it to form a government of national unity to represent Laos at the impending 14-Nation Conference.

2. The Assembly, "properly rehearsed," would call on the King to head the government.

3. Boun Oum would then offer the resignation of his government.

4. Next, Souvanna, fully briefed and ready in Phnom Penh, would come to Vientiane as a simple deputy.

5. After a 24 hour recess, the King would reconvene the Assembly and announce the new government, either headed by himself or by a previously agreed upon political figure.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1818, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr In reply to a request by the JCS (see item 29 March) CINCPAC supplied to the JCS information on the deployment of US forces to execute SEATO Plan 5. CINCPAC declared that PACOM forces were in a position to begin landing in Laos within 48 hours of the order to execute and this reaction time could be reduced to within 24 hours by the movement of forces to closer stand-by positions. CINCPAC forecast that, to effect this additional pre-positioning, he would require that the full resources of the 315th Air Division be "loaded and cocked" in the Philippines. These actions could be taken "on short notice," CINCPAC stated.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050446Z Apr 61.

5 Apr A combined assault wave of FAL paratroop and infantry forces in C-47s and helicopters was airdropped and airlanded north of Muong Kassy, as the FAL launched its offensive to retake that town (located on Route 13 between Vang Vieng and RJ 7-13). All phases of the operation reportedly worked "very efficiently, with skilled American technicians located at key positions during the execution." One paratroop and one infantry battalion were successfully assembled in the drop area, a road block of Route 13 was quickly established, and patrols were probing southward. However, the GM 12 offensive north toward Muong Kassy, to join with the airlifted force, made no progress.

(On 4 April, as the FAL drop force was leaving Vientiane, Ambassador Brown had questioned the use of the C-47s and helicopters, citing the possible effect upon diplomatic negotiations. Although the Ambassador acquiesced in the departure of the force as scheduled, CINCPAC stated that this last minute hesitation was "indicative of indecision and lack of complete support of Phoumi." Avowing that it was "vital" that JCS and CINCPAC have full knowledge through military sources of all "important problems involving military matters," CINCPAC on 5 April requested CHPEO to "parallel promptly

any State ~~message~~ message pertaining to urgent or emergency military matters by military channels to [CINCPAC] with info to JCS.")

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 91-61 - 92-61, 5-6 Apr 61;  
(TS) Msgs, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101085, 6 Apr 61;  
CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 052241Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 042011Z Apr 61.

5 Apr According to a circular message from the Secretary of State to US diplomatic missions, the British Foreign Secretary was instructing the British Ambassador to France to tell Souvanna that, if he were able to come in a "private capacity," the Secretary of State would be pleased to see him in Washington in the near future.  
(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1523, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed the Secretary of State that, in the presence of Premier Chou En-lai, Chinese Communist Deputy Premier Lu Ting-yi, had proclaimed his country's support for the Soviet proposals on Laos (see item 1 April). Speaking at a diplomatic reception in Peiping the previous day, Lu had declared that the early convocation of an enlarged Geneva conference was the "key" to a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Laos. Lu had also asserted that "serious setbacks" of pro-US forces had compelled US imperialism to profess an interest in such a settlement, although this had been belied by US military moves.  
(C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1587, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr In an official communique, the Chinese Nationalist Government Information Office declared that the completion date for evacuating anti-Communist Chinese escapees from the Burma-Laos-Thailand border area to Taiwan had been extended from 7 to 12 April. According to the communique, the original date had been postponed in order to enable the Chinese who were living in more remote areas to take advantage of the opportunity for voluntary evacuation.  
(U) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 608, 6 Apr 61.

5 Apr CINCPAC informed all SEATO military advisers and the Commander of the SEATO Field Force that, because of the current military situation in Laos and the recent SEATO military advisers conference (see item 2 April), he had reviewed SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 and had concluded that the plan required some "up-dating," particularly with regard to "realigning" the deployment of the SEATO nations' military contingents. CINCPAC proposed the following composition and deployment of forces:

1. Force A (Vientiane)

2 US BLT's  
2 Thai battalions  
1 Pakistani battalion

2. Force B (Seno-Savannakhet)

1 Australian battalion  
1 New Zealand battalion  
1 UK battalion



## 3. Base Area Command

Commonwealth, Thai, Pakistani,  
Philippine and US support forces

## 4. Air Component Forces

Commonwealth, Thai and US air components

## 5. Central Force Reserve

1 Thai RCT (less 2 battalions)  
1 Thai paratroop ranger/SAS company  
1 US airborne battle group

## 6. General Reserve

1 Pakistani brigade group (-)  
1 French infantry battalion  
1 Philippine engineer company

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Defense Canberra, et al.,  
DA IN 100585, 5 Apr 61.

6 Apr

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Prime Minister Sarit had agreed "in principle" to the conduct of operations in Laos by 3-26s based in Thailand (action 18 of military courses of action, see item 4 April). The only Thai stipulation had been that they be consulted before the execution of such attack.

During the interview in which this approval was secured, Phoumi had entered the discussions, painting a "black picture of massive Viet Minh . . . invasion."

[REDACTED]

Ambassador Johnson stated that Phoumi had "succeeded in communicating to Sarit his apparent present mood of extreme pessimism" and that Sarit was "genuinely alarmed."

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1806 and 1807,  
6 Apr, 1809, 7 Apr, CINCPAC to JCS, 070147Z Apr 61.

6 Apr

[REDACTED]  
authorizing, with the approval of the Departments of State and Defense, the integration of the Meo irregulars into the FAL.

[REDACTED] the concurrence of Ambassador Brown, CHPEO, and the US Military Attache in Laos, had proposed this integration in the form of an increase in the authorized FAL force levels sufficient to permit the FAL to assume command of all Meos [REDACTED]

According to [REDACTED] the following advantages would accrue from this proposal:

1. The RLG could claim occupation and therefore control of large areas in Xieng Khouang province, areas they could not claim to control if the Meos continued in an irregular status.

2. Supply of, and overt relations with, the Meo forces would be legalized. These contacts could be maintained covertly only with difficulty.

3. The basis for a larger measure of future RLG control of the Meos would be established; thereby, the apprehensions of the RLG with respect to arming Meos should be dispelled.

In granting US Government approval to this proposal, [REDACTED] the FAL force ceiling in the auto-defense category would be raised to permit the integration of up to 6,000 Meos. (This raise was separated explicitly from the increases recommended by General Trapnell; see item 31 March). The integration should take place at the earliest possible moment, without publicity. The enemy must not be given grounds to charge that this move was simply a ruse to complicate the status of Xieng Khouang province. [REDACTED] "entire affair can be handled in a way that will make it look as if these Meos were always part of the FAL auto-defense complex." [REDACTED]

6 Apr CINCPAC directed that CJTF 116 and staff revert to planning status (see items 16-17 December, 7 January, 15 February, 22 March). At the same time, CINCPAC designated the Deputy CINCUSARPAC as the Commander (Designate) of SEATO Field Forces under SEATO Field Forces Plan 5. The Deputy was to assemble and activate his staff at Okinawa.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, Deputy CINCUSARPAC, et al., 062320Z Apr 61.

6 Apr According to the Chinese Communist Press, Marshal Chen Yi, at a news conference in Djakarta on 2 April, had declared that, if SEATO nations sent troops to take part in the civil war in Laos, the Chinese Government, if requested by the 'legal government headed by Prince Phouma,' would not 'remain idle.'

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1597, 7 Apr 61.

6 Apr CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had requested the following:

1. One Thai artillery battery.
2. Five replacements for T-6s lost in action.
3. Authority to drop bombs from T-6s.

CHPEO considered that the requested artillery could be used; in fact, two batteries of 105mm howitzers were needed. Since, however, the most that CHPEO could say for the effectiveness of the T-6s was that they were "better than nothing," he recommended that the T-6s be replaced only "if it is decided that it is not advisable to furnish better aircraft and it is desired to get as much material as we can into Laos prior to a possible ceasefire." With regard to the arming of the T-6s with bombs, CHPEO stated his continued indorsement of this course (see item 18 January).

(For CINCPACs comments to the JCS see item 7 April.)  
(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101123, 6 Apr 61.

6 Apr

The JCS notified CINCPAC of the US Government approval of RT-33 photo reconnaissance flights over Laos (see item 4 April). The JCS considered, however, that RF-101 aircraft based in Thailand or upon carriers were better suited to the mission. CINCPAC was authorized, therefore, to conduct photo reconnaissance over Laos with either of the two types of aircraft, as he considered appropriate. The JCS placed two restrictions on the flights, as follows:

1. Reconnaissance flights utilizing US aircraft and crews must be conducted in response to an RLG request.
2. Flights would enter and exit Laos from Thailand or South Viet Nam and would avoid the northern and eastern boundaries of Laos.

The following day, CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had made an official request for reconnaissance flights within Laos by US aircraft with US crews.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993538, 6 Apr 61;  
(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101477, 7 Apr 61.

7 Apr

CINCPAC commented to the JCS upon Phoumi's request to CHPEO for artillery, aircraft, and permission to bomb with T-6s (see items 6 April). CINCPAC recommended that negotiations be instituted to acquire two 105mm batteries for the Thakhek and Paksane areas. Also, CINCPAC urged in strong terms that Ambassador Brown be instructed to remove his restriction on bombing by Laotian aircraft, and that Phoumi's request for permission to use his aircraft for bombing be approved.

CINCPAC recommended that additional T-6 aircraft be provided to the RLG as the Laotians acquired the capability to "absorb and fly them"; CINCPAC also broached the subject of supplying to the Laotians F8F fighters currently in the possession of Thailand, suggesting that as a quid pro quo the US accede to recent Thai requests for improved air defense systems.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070017Z Apr 61; (S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 101110, 6 Apr 61;  
(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 101083, 6 Apr 61.

7 Apr

[REDACTED]  
(see items 13 and 15 April).

(TS) JCSM-233-61 to SecDef, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 7 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/954, 7 Apr 61.

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7 Apr

CHPEO submitted a periodic intelligence report on the enemy situation in Laos for the period 13 March to 3 April. The report contained, inter alia, the following observations and conclusions:

1. At the end of the period, the enemy retained full control of the western approach to the Plaine des Jarres and had, by the capture of Tha Thom (see item 1 April) effectively denied FAL forces access to the southern approach to the plain.

2. By the use of propaganda, subversion, and rumors, the enemy had reduced FAL morale, encouraging defections and unnecessary withdrawals.

3. The enemy had continued to build up his logistical base in the Plaine des Jarres; both airlift and truck convoy had continued with only minor harassment by either the FAL or Meo guerrillas.

4. The enemy numbered approximately 14,100 troops, whose morale and combat efficiency were both rated "good."

5. The enemy could maintain and reinforce his positions in contact with the FAL; after reinforcing at any one location, he could "counter-attack from that position at a time of his own choosing."

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, et al., DA 101693, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that British diplomats in Paris had, on the previous day, urged Prince Souvanna to visit Washington and to curtail his trips to "Iron Curtain" capitals. According to a report from the British Embassy, Souvanna had stated that, although he had not rejected the idea of a visit to the US at a later date, "he would have to think about it."

In a later message, Ambassador Gavin reported that the British Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs had expressed the opinion that Souvanna wanted a "definite official" invitation from the US Ambassador in Paris. Furthermore, the Under Secretary and the British Ambassador had strongly urged that Ambassador Gavin extend a definite invitation to the Laotian Prince for 18 April. Both British diplomats believed, Gavin said, that "this would do the trick."

In reply to Ambassador Gavin's message, Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassador to follow the British recommendation and extend the invitation directly to Souvanna for a visit to Washington on 18 April.

As further background on the Souvanna Phouma invitation, US diplomats in Paris were advised that, if Souvanna's "deportment" in the immediate future should warrant his seeing the President, the Secretary of State believed that the Laotian Prince would undoubtedly be received at the White House.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4279, 4289, 8 Apr 61;  
(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 4218, (no date), 4216, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr The Secretary of State directed the US Ambassador to Laos to explore further with the King the Ambassador's proposals for reorganizing the RLG (see item 5 April). The Secretary's instructions were implementations of a decision, based on discussions between the US and the United Kingdom at the highest level, to have a "broader based provisional government in office prior to [the] convening of [an] international conference."

The Ambassador was instructed to stress, in his discussions with the King, the need for a broadly representative provisional government but to point out "the extremely difficult position" of Laos at the conference table should its delegation be headed by a "leftish-inclined" premier such as Souvanna. The Secretary stressed particularly the need to avoid placing too much reliance on Souvanna, as the "key" to the entire situation in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1547, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that on the previous day Phoumi had "poured out his fears" to a US Embassy officer. According to the report, Phoumi depicted himself as desperately fighting a "last ditch" battle to keep his "tough" policy alive. He still believed that only through military action could peace be brought to Laos, and that, if properly armed and if given "outside help" commensurate with that given the PL by the Viet Minh, the RLG could achieve victory.

Phoumi stated that he did not believe in a political solution; that Sarit did not want it; and that the Pathet Lao would not respect it. (See item 13 April for JCS action stemming from this message.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1837, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr The Secretary of State, in compliance with a decision by President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan, directed the US Delegate to the UN to begin contingency planning with the British Delegate for a possible referral of the Laos question to the UN. Planning was to be undertaken on the basis of two major assumptions: 1) a simultaneous appeal by Laos to SEATO and the UN for assistance in protecting the country's independence, territorial integrity and neutrality, resulting in a SEATO military intervention; and 2) referral of the Laos question to the UN in the absence of any SEATO intervention and as the result of an unsatisfactory outcome of current political negotiations.

(TS) Msg, SecState to USUN, 1955, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr

[REDACTED]

(see item 15 April).

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1561, 8 Apr 61.

9 Apr

In response to instructions from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to France invited Souvanna to visit the US. According to the Ambassador's report to the Secretary of State, Souvanna had expressed a desire to accept the invitation and to talk with US officials, if he could make the necessary rearrangements in his schedule of visits to Iron Curtain countries.

Later in the day, reported the Ambassador, Souvanna had called an Embassy officer and had accepted the US invitation for the period 18-20 April.

The following day, in a message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State explained why the US Government had invited Souvanna to visit Washington and the conditions under which the visit would be made. The Secretary emphasized that the Laotian leader was coming in a "private capacity" and that his visit in no way implied US recognition of him as Laotian Prime Minister or endorsed a future for him in Laotian affairs. Nor did it imply any change in the US policy of support for the Boun Oum Government. Nevertheless, Souvanna was an important figure in the Laotian crisis. Although he wielded little effective power at the present and his claims of popular support were questionable, the Secretary noted that Souvanna's consistent advocacy of a neutral Laos had tended to identify him with that policy. Furthermore, as a Royal Prince, Souvanna remained a major figure on the Laotian scene, and his present tour of world capitals had, unfortunately, raised his stature internationally.

By inviting Souvanna to Washington, said the Secretary, the US Government hoped to ascertain the Prince's views on "details" of the Laotian situation. In particular, US officials wanted to evaluate 1) the degree of Souvanna's determination to preserve the integrity of his country, and 2) the extent to which he realized the difficulties of maintaining the independence of Laos in the face of continuing subversion. Furthermore, US officials would be able to emphasize the determination of the US to take action that would prevent the Communists from gaining control of Laos.

The US Government, however, had serious reservations concerning Souvanna, stemming from the Prince's apparent complete lack of understanding of Communist purposes and methods, and his "self-delusion" which made him "naively confident" that he could control Communist subversion in Laos.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4290, 4291, 9 Apr 61;  
(OUO) Msg, SecState Circular, 1554, 10 Apr 61.

10 Apr

(see items 6 and 15 April).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1828, 10 Apr 61,  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 110113Z Apr 61.

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10 Apr

CHPEO forwarded to the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, for information, a copy of his 9 April recommendation to CINCPAC that two RB-26 aircraft be made available immediately for tactical reconnaissance in Laos. CHPEO had stated that, although RF-106, RT-33, and RF-101 aircraft would augment the present aerial reconnaissance capability, these jets would not provide "adequate and timely tactical ground information." CHPEO felt that, because the enemy was mounting operations less than 75 miles from Vientiane, he required aircraft based in Laos that could act to meet intelligence requirements in a matter of minutes. Moreover, CHPEO desired to use experienced PEO observers, familiar with the ground on which the enemy was operating; these observers required an aircraft that could "get down on the deck" to locate enemy troop movements over jungle trails.

In a message of the same date, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of his full concurrence with the CHPEO's recommendation.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to JCS, SecDef, DA IN 102248, 10 April 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1846, 10 April 61.

11 Apr

The JCS followed up their memorandum of 31 March 1961 to the Secretary of Defense (see item) with another, in which they gave their approval, subject to certain comments, to those recommendations made by General Trapnell concerning Laos that had not been previously approved. These recommendations had been referred by the JCS to CINCPAC for his comments and recommendations prior to final decision by the Joint Chiefs. Following receipt of CINCPAC's views (see item 4 April), the JCS commented on the Trapnell recommendations concerned as follows:

1. 

2. Provide armed helicopters. The development of armed helicopters in an "armed reconnaissance and suppressive fires role," the JCS conceded, was still in an experimental stage. Therefore armed helicopters should not be indiscriminately used. However, the provision of such helicopters to the FAL would, in the opinion of the JCS, furnish a basis for further evaluation of the entire concept of armed-helicopter employment because of the operational environment involved. Hence, the JCS recommended that the use of up to six US armed helicopters be authorized if requested by CINCPAC, the crews to be furnished in the same manner as B-26 crews. CINCPAC's further views on this subject, the JCS added, would be forwarded to the Secretary (see item 20 April).

3. Provide PEO an organic intelligence-production and counterintelligence capability. The JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations to the Secretary in line with the developing situation.



4. Authorize support for nine additional FAL battalions. The JCS requested the Secretary of Defense to authorize, in addition to the increase in the FAL troop ceiling recently authorized, an increase of 5,956, distributed as follows: six infantry battalions (2,520), one parachute battalion (800), replacements undergoing training (1,654), and service troops (982). The JCS also requested that Defense Support funds in the amount of \$652,000 be provided for the pay of these forces for the months of May and June (see item 18 April).

5. Establish JUWTF for unconventional warfare and psychological warfare campaign. Noting that this recommendation had long-range aspects, the JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations on it separately.

(TS) JCSM-232-61 to SecDef, "Laos (U)," 11 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/952, 6 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/952, 11 Apr 61.

11 Apr

The JCS replied to a memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), dated 29 March 1961. The Secretary had requested recommendations regarding the composition, terms of reference, operating procedures, and forces and logistical requirements for an international commission for supervision and control (ICC) in Laos, should such a body, or a similar one, be established.

From the military point of view, the JCS said, it would be inimical to US interests to re-establish the Geneva-constituted ICC under its old terms of reference. That body had been rendered ineffective because of five basic limitations: 1) The field inspection teams had been required to obtain permission from the two antagonists prior to conduct each inspection. 2) The Commission had been composed of one member nation that was definitely pro-West, another that was definitely pro-Communist, and a third that was reluctant to offend either of the other two; thus the Commission had not been able to act as a unit. 3) Nevertheless, on questions concerning violations or threats of violations possibly leading to a resumption of hostilities, recommendations had required a unanimous vote. 4) The ICC had lacked the authority and means to enforce its decisions. 5) The inspection teams had lacked sufficient personnel and logistical support.

The JCS feared that re-establishment of the ICC under the 1954 terms of reference might occur as a consequence of the political decision to couple a de facto cease-fire with an invitation to Prime Minister Nehru to summon the ICC to reconvene in New Delhi. If this re-establishment under the 1954 terms of reference did occur, two serious disadvantages for the West would result. First, a subsequent agreement on adequate revision of the terms of reference would be more difficult to achieve; and second, ineffective as the Commission might be in inspecting and supervising the importation

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of arms, it would still seriously hamper US efforts to stockpile an adequate supply of material for the RLG; at the same time, it would be unable to slow the flow of Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that US policy should be 1) to require the responsibilities of the ICC (Laos) to be limited, initially, solely to confirming that a de facto cease-fire existed, and 2) to refrain from agreeing to any expansion of the mission of the ICC to embrace over-all supervision, inspection, and reporting on the entry of military personnel and equipment into Laos until its terms of reference had been revised by the international conference. Even under completely new and improved terms of reference the ICC would not be able to compel even grudging compliance with its recommendations or with decisions approved by the conference; moreover, it was doubtful that the Commission could eliminate covert Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao. Nevertheless, the JCS continued, new terms of reference could enable the Commission to "police" Laos more effectively than had been done previously, by publicizing violations and subjecting violators to adverse world opinion.

The two essential improvements the new terms of reference should incorporate, as compared with the old, therefore, should be elimination of the need for field inspection teams to obtain permission from the two antagonists before conducting inspections, and substitution of a majority vote for unanimity on the part of the Commission in making recommendations concerning violations or threats of violations that might lead to resumption of hostilities.

As for the composition of the Commission, despite their criticism of the 1954 arrangement the JCS did not believe it was realistic to expect that that arrangement could be improved from the point of view of the West. Incorporation of additional neutralist countries like Cambodia and Burma, they thought, would only promote unwieldiness and make agreement more difficult. They therefore recommended that the US favor the continuation of India, Canada, and Poland as the member nations of the Commission. At the same time, however, they recommended that the US represent to Nehru its concern regarding the quality and political leanings of the individuals India might subsequently provide to the ICC, particularly the chairman, emphasizing the importance of the Commission's task as a "test case" in settling disputes between the West and Communist powers.

The questions of operating procedures and force and logistical requirements, the JCS thought, could be left to the Commission itself so far as details were concerned, provided that the terms of reference contained comprehensive language ensuring that the Commission would be provided with sufficient personnel funding and logistical support to accomplish its mission.

As a matter separate from but related to the foregoing, the JCS also recommended that the US urgently prepare plans to provide for the aggressive and continuing exploitation of whatever opportunities might develop for using news media to focus world-wide attention on violations of whatever agreements might be reached by an international conference and on obstructions in the way of the effective operation of whatever control mechanism might be established.

On 24 April 1961 the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) forwarded the foregoing views and recommendations of the JCS to the Secretary of State, recommending that they form the US position in the matter.

(S) JCSM-222-61 to SecDef, "Activities of International Commission in Laos (C)," 11 Apr 61, derived from (S) JCS 1992/950, 6 Apr 61, as amended by (S) Dec On JCS 1992/950, 11 Apr 61; (S) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/950, 27 Apr 61; (S) JCS 1992/944, 30 Mar 61.

11 Apr

The Thai Ambassador to the US delivered two nearly identical notes from Prime Minister Sarit to the President and the Secretary of State. As reported by the Secretary of State to the US Ambassador to Thailand, these notes made the following major points: 1) Thailand supported the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Laotian problem; 2) such a political solution should not, however, result in partition or dismemberment of Laos; 3) Thailand would not be able to support any solution permitting Communist elements to assume control of Laos; 4) the optimum solution would be a genuinely neutral regime with wider representation but excluding Communist factions subservient to outside control; 5) if a peaceful solution was not possible, Thailand would cooperate with the US in any appropriate action to "preserve peace, freedom and well-being of our people."

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 12 Apr 61.

11 Apr

In reply to the Secretary of State's request for information that would be pertinent to the Department's discussions with Souvanna upon his arrival in Washington (see item 9 April), the US Ambassador to South Viet Nam reported the following:

1. The South Vietnamese Government was convinced that, if Souvanna Phouma resumed his former position as the Laotian Prime Minister, Laos would be lost to the Communists through a political takeover of the country.

2. In that event, South Viet Nam would feel itself seriously endangered. Viet Cong activities in and through Laos would undoubtedly be intensified in order to accelerate the Communist campaign to take over South Viet Nam.

3. Under a Souvanna Premiership, the status of South Viet Nam's diplomatic mission in Vietiane would probably be seriously lowered, and the government of North Viet Nam would be recognized. This would cause South Viet Nam to lose face in Asia at the very time it was losing ground in the diplomatic struggle in Africa to maintain its status as the only legal government in Viet Nam.

4. The Vietnamese Government would probably not object if Souvanna were placed in an important position in the Laotian cabinet, provided that his influence could be effectively restricted by strong non-Communist Laotians. The Government of Viet Nam also would probably hope that the new RLG, in

addition to having the King as Prime Minister, would have Phoui Sananikone as its "center axis," rather than Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 1590, 11 Apr 61; SecState Circular, 1548, 8 Apr 61.

12 Apr

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to Laos obtained an audience with the King in which he inquired as to His Majesty's views on 1) a unified government to represent Laos at the 14-Nation Conference, and 2) the role of Souvanna in such a government. The King expressed the opinion that, if Souvanna would come back as prime minister of a government in which he was counterbalanced by strong anti-Communists, "something useful could be accomplished." The King was, however, firmly opposed to becoming prime minister himself.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1859, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported the attitude of the French Government on the Laos situation as described by the Political Director of the Foreign Office. According to the Political Director, the "most desirable future status" of Laos would be the "pro-Western framework of [the] Geneva Accords." If this status was not possible, another formula would have to be found to "keep Laos free from foreign domination but permit it to belong to the UN" and provide for legitimate defense. A unilateral Laotian declaration, of which the international conference could take note, would be the best way of achieving this status. The French were opposed to "guaranteed neutrality" because it offered too many opportunities for outside interference.

With regard to military aid to Laos, the French believed that the provisions of the Geneva Accords should be maintained. Once a conference was convened, arms deliveries should be suspended until a new Laotian Government chose its own supplier. The US would have to withdraw its military personnel, but a "western military presence" would be maintained. The French preferred that economic aid be furnished by bilateral arrangements, but were "interested" in the British proposal for a multilateral agency.

As for the means of "controlling" the foregoing, the French preferred a new neutral commission composed of Burma, Cambodia, and India to the existing ICC.

Finally, the French were of the opinion that a new Laotian Government of national union under Souvanna should be formed. This government would have to include members of the Pathet Lao, but it was hoped that these members could be denied the more important cabinet posts.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4369, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr Ambassador Drumright informed the Secretary of State of further developments in the KMT evacuation program. According to Foreign Minister Hsu, if definite evidence developed that more irregulars were willing to accept evacuation, Hsu had been authorized to continue evacuating them until 20 April (see item 5 April).  
(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState 625, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that, in an intensification of the psychological warfare program and in conjunction with the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April), the FAL had dropped 21,000 surrender leaflets over the enemy deployments in the Muong Kassy area.  
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 120250Z Apr 61.

13 Apr At a top-level meeting in Washington the President authorized action to render PEO and LTAG personnel in Laos comparable in all respects to MAAG personnel. This was to be done by removing all restrictions on their participation in combat operations, use of rank, and wearing of uniforms. The consensus of the meeting was that such action, by enabling US military personnel to provide the leadership and guidance essential to the successful conduct of operations, would bolster the military position of the FAL and improve the morale of the RLG.

On the same date the JCS informed CINCPAC of this decision, and the State Department informed the US Ambassadors at Bangkok, Vientiane, London, and Paris. The State Department indicated further in its message that the British and French Ambassadors in Washington would be informed the next morning, at which time the approval and cooperation of their countries would be requested. In addition, the two Ambassadors were to be advised that if the Communists used this US action, which would be within the scope of actions indulged in by the Communists themselves, as a pretext for retaliation, the US would then consider appropriate SEATO action and would expect British and French support.

Ambassador Brown, the State Department message continued, was to inform the Laotian Prime Minister and Phoumi, and if possible the King, of the US decision; at the same time he was to request the RLG to make an appropriate request to the US in order that the military assistance would be covered by a US-Laotian agreement. Further, he was to urge as vigorous military action as possible upon Phoumi, emphasizing the President's view that Phoumi must give the US something to support (see items 16 and 17 April).

The US Ambassador in Bangkok was instructed to inform Sarit of the US decision immediately

The Ambassador was also to suggest that Sarit might wish to help spur Phoumi to action by a personal communication (see item 15 April).

The US Ambassadors in London and Paris were to inform the governments at those capitals that the US was fully aware its projected action regarding the PEO and LTAG personnel would be in technical violation of the Geneva Accords; but this action, they were to point out, would only redress in small measure the imbalance caused by massive violation of those Accords by the Communist Signatories and by one of the co-Chairmen over an extended period. The Ambassador in London was to point out further that the US action was in line with the paramilitary steps preceding formal SEATO action already discussed with the principal SEATO allies. (For British reaction, see item 14 April; for French reaction, item 20 April.)

In a subsequent message (date not precisely known but not later than 15 April), the State Department informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian request should be couched in language requesting establishment of a MAAG, since this would be the "neatest" way of handling the change of status of the PEO personnel under the circumstances.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1587), Vientiane (1100), London (4844), and Paris (4316), 13 Apr 61;

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994079, 13 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1598) and Vientiane (1113), date not precisely known but not later than 15 Apr 61.

13 Apr

The JCS recommended by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense a list of measures "which would aid in counteracting the adverse military implications of a political settlement in Laos." They considered these measures necessary because the establishment of a neutral government in Laos could result in even greater military disadvantages from the US point of view than had obtained under the regime of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (following the 1954 Geneva Accords). Under the ICC the precedent had been established that foreign forces and personnel could not legally remain in Laos or be introduced except under very rigid inspection and control. The degree of difficulty for the US under a neutral government would of course depend upon whether that government was oriented toward the free world or dominated by the Communists. If the Pathet Lao threat were not eliminated from such a government, that government's establishment might result in intensified pressures from Laos against the borders of Thailand and South Viet Nam, with growing difficulty on the part of those two countries in securing their frontiers. Insurgency problems would also be intensified in Thailand and South Viet Nam.

The following were the counteractive measures recommended by the JCS. (Comments or suggestions regarding their implementation were included):

1. Improve intelligence collection in Laos and adjacent areas.
2. Establish stay-behind capability for resistance to a Communist coup.

3. Recruit, organize, and train, outside of Laos, cadres for later infiltration into Laos for specific missions.

4. Plan and prepare to infiltrate personnel and supplies required by item 3 above.

5. Continue to review adequacy of US support for counterinsurgency activities in SEA.

6. Plan for continued logistic support of pro-Western military elements within Laos (on a covert basis if necessary).

7. Plan for continued training support of pro-Western Lao military elements by other than US personnel if necessary.

8. Accelerate unconventional- and psychological-warfare activities in North Viet Nam and South China, and ensure a fully co-ordinated effort involving all (concerned) agencies of the US Government.

(On 25 April 1961 the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman of the JCS that the foregoing recommendations had been referred to the Inter-departmental Task Group on Laos, operating under direction of the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs;

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) JCSM-242-61 to SecDef, "Military Implications of a Political Settlement in Laos (C)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/953, 10 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On 1992/953, same date; (C) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/953, 1 May 61; (S) 2d N/H of JCS 1992/953, 3 May 61.

3 Apr

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS noted that the military situation in Laos was continuing to deteriorate, that the Communist bloc was delivering supplies and equipment in increasing amounts to the Plaine des Jarres area, and that Communist-bloc technicians were continuing to operate with the Pathet Lao/Kong Le forces. Immediate action was required, the JCS believed, to improve the morale of Laos Minister of Defense Phoumi (see item of 8 April) and generally to improve the military situation so as to give the West a better negotiating position prior to any cease-fire between the opposing forces.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that CINCPAC be authorized to take the following measures immediately:

1. Authorize the operational employment of all available (about 15) B-26 aircraft present in Thailand against appropriate military targets in Laos, using machine guns, rockets, high-explosive munitions, and napalm.



2. Authorize Laos Army T-6 aircraft to employ high-explosive munitions.

3. Authorize the conversion of the PEO to a MAAG.

In addition, the JCS stated that the following previously recommended measures should be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Authorize and provide logistic support and pay for seven additional Laos Army battalions and supporting service troops.

2. [REDACTED]

(TS) JCSM-244-61 to SecDef, "Situation in Laos (U)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/955, 11 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/955, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr The FAL, admitting that the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April) had been only "partially successful," ordered the withdrawal of the airdropped troops to Luang Prabang.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 99-61, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok 1) described the progress made to date by the SEATO Council of Representatives in completing political actions required for intervention in Laos under SEATO Plan 5, and 2) recommended specific steps for completing these actions. Progress to date was as follows:

1. The Council of Representatives had accepted the UK/Australian definition of Communist insurgency: "armed action against [the] established government of [a] country by organized bands or groups, under conditions which do not permit such action to be identified as overt and direct external aggression, but subject to such degree of foreign control, direction or support as to amount to indirect external aggression."

2. Thailand had agreed to serve as "appointed nation," but contingent, apparently, upon a satisfactory cost sharing agreement.

3. The Council of Representatives had agreed that the SEATO Force Commander and deputy commander would be Thai, the Field Force Commander would be American, and the Deputy Field Force Commander would be Australian or British.

4. The Council had also agreed on the directive to the SEATO Force Commander.

5. The US had suggested an Australian be named political adviser, but no decision had been made as yet.

6. The Council of Representatives had reached an understanding that it would issue, upon specific instructions from the SEATO Council of Ministers, 1) assessments of the situation in Laos describing the existence of a state of insurgency as defined in Plan 5, and 2) the warnings called for by the plan.

7. Little progress had been made on cost-sharing. The US Charge d'Affaires requested guidance from the Department of State on this matter.

8. The Council of Representatives had not acted on a status of forces agreement; the US had opposed such an agreement.

9. On the more general question of contacts with the RTG and RLG, the Military Programs Office had suggested that all direct contacts be carried on by the "appointed nation." This proposal had not been discussed in the Council.

10. The Council of Representatives had not "specifically" considered the "mission and concept" of the SEATO force; the US Charge recommended that understandings on these points between SEATO and the RLG would be necessary upon implementation of Plan 5 and should be reached by the "appointed nation" through the Field Force Commander, with political guidance from the Council of Representatives.

11. The US Charge understood that arrangements for contributions to the SEATO forces were being made by the Military Advisers.

(See item 28 April for action on these political measures.)

The US Charge recommended that, in view of the likelihood of a SEATO intervention, the following actions be taken:

1. The US Representative on the SEATO Council of Representatives should request written confirmation in the Council of Representatives of agreements already reached on the items listed above.

2. The US Representative should submit a written request to the Council of Representatives for appropriate action leading to decisions on all outstanding matters listed above.

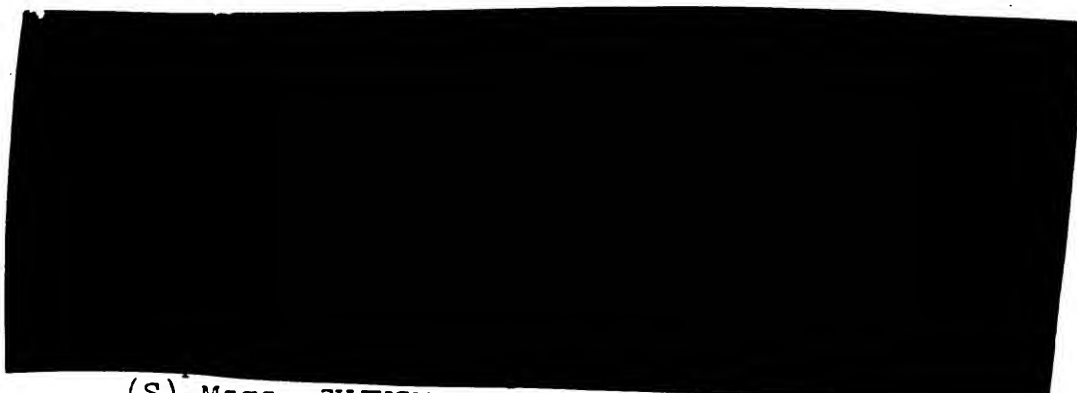
3. Unless a cease-fire had been achieved meanwhile, the US Representative should request the issuance of the "Charter Yellow" warning called for in SEATO Plan 5.

(The Secretary of State approved these three recommendations on 15 April.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1846, 13 Apr 61;  
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1600, 15 Apr 61; (TS)  
Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1892, 26 Jan 60.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
13-14  
Apr

CHJUSMAG Thailand, having been informed that the EKARAD training program had been deferred indefinitely, urged CHPEO Laos to cause Phoumi to reconsider this decision. CINCPAC, in a message supporting CHJUSMAG's plea, requested CHPEO to exercise his "full influence" on Phoumi to achieve the continuation of the training program. CINCPAC authorized CHPEO to tell Phoumi that it would be difficult for CINCPAC to continue to support Phoumi in the present manner unless Phoumi made a "reasonable effort to give his soldiers training they must have for surviving in combat."



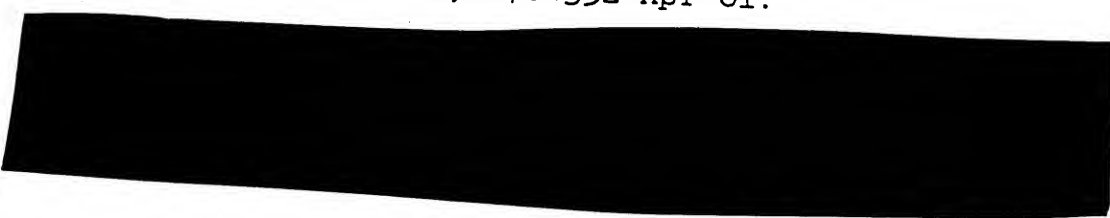
(S) Msgs. CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 131115Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 140054Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 140510Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 141554Z Apr 61.

14 Apr

Referring to the JCS message of 13 April, CINCPAC directed CHPEO Laos to lift the restrictions on his PEO and LTAG personnel in regard to uniforms, rank, and participation in combat. Later the same day, having been informed by the JCS that implementation of their message of 13 April should follow receipt by Ambassador Brown of an appropriate request from the RLC, CINCPAC amended his instructions to CHPEO accordingly.

On 17 April CINCPAC amplified the foregoing by confirming CHPEO's understanding that LTAG personnel would no longer be restricted to the level of battalion headquarters, and by the further statements that, after the change to uniformed status, all former PEO and LTAG personnel would be armed while in the field, that their primary function would be to serve as advisers though they would not be restricted from participation in combat when necessary, and that after the establishment of the MAAG Laos there should be no further distinction between PEO and LTAG. The LTAG personnel, he explained, would become MTTs, part of the MAAG staff (see item 17 April).

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 142005Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994116, 14 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 142255Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 161010Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 170435Z Apr 61.



14 Apr

1)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1843, 13 Apr 61;  
 (TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1859, 14 Apr 61;  
 (TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1591, 14 Apr 61.

14 Apr

Upon learning of the US decision to put the PEO military personnel in Laos into uniform and to permit them to participate in combat operations, the British Government expressed the hope that the implementation of this decision could be delayed "for a few more days." An advance draft of the British message containing this hope was furnished the US Ambassador in London, who cabled it to the State Department. The British took the line that the Soviets appeared to be relaxing Communist military activity in Laos and that there were other indications that a Soviet reply to the West concerning a cease-fire in Laos was imminent. What worried the British was the possibility that the US action, if taken before a Soviet reply had been received, might be seen by world opinion as direct military action and might be considered by such opinion, "however unreasonably," as having torpedoed the chances of a settlement just when they appeared favorable. It was obviously legitimate for the US to take paramilitary action, the British reply continued, but the British Government proposed that the Soviets be given until the middle of the following week to reply. If they had not done so by then, they could be put completely in the wrong by the focusing of public attention on the situation at that time (see item 15 April).

(TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4189, 14 Apr 61.

14 Apr

CHPEO: [REDACTED] reported that 40 auto defense units of 100 men each could be formed from available minority tribes in Laos (in addition to the 600 Meo whose regularization was authorized on 6 April; see item). The resulting larger number of auto defense units deployed before ICC inspections commenced would reinforce RLG claims and weaken Pathet Lao claims to control or possession of the territories thus organized, according to the US officials. They therefore recommended that the formation of the additional units be authorized; that the personnel recruited be included on the FAL troop lists and paid through normal FAL channels; [REDACTED] (see item 18 April).

15 Apr

[REDACTED]

Replying to the British Government's comments concerning the projected change of status of PEO personnel in Laos (see item 14 April), Secretary Rusk pointed out in a letter to Lord Home that the US move was premised on an assessment of the Laotian situation different from that of the British. Whereas the British saw a de facto Soviet cease-fire in the making, and a Soviet reply on a formal cease-fire imminent, the US saw the Western position in Laos deteriorating dangerously while the Soviets procrastinated in their reply.

Militarily, although there were no major battles being fought, the Communist buildup was continuing. There were at least three critical areas where the West could be faced overnight with virtual collapse: 1) in the area five miles northeast of Nhommarath, to the rear of Thakhek; 2) on the Tha Thom-Paksane road, where a breakthrough could sever Laos at the narrow waist; and 3) around Muong Kassy, farther to the north, where the situation might rapidly result in a serious threat to Luang Prabang or even its being overrun.

Politically, the decay of the RLG was still more serious. The leaders lacked the united determination they should have in the face of national danger.

The steps being taken by the US were designed to provide at least some stiffening of the RLG backbone, both militarily and politically. These steps were wholly within the methods of operation on the other side and could not "torpedo" any conference if there was the slightest Soviet interest in a neutral Laos.

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, SecState to London, 4874, 15 Apr 61.

15 Apr

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1861, 15 Apr 61.

15 Apr In response to a request from OASD (ISA), CHPEO reported upon the status of all Laotian training, other than pilot training, in [REDACTED] Laos, as follows:

1. EKARAD had been temporarily suspended because of the tactical requirement for all available troops (see item 13-14 April). [REDACTED]

2. The training being given in Laos included:

a. English language instruction to 393 FAL personnel.

b. A two-year program, initiated in March 1961, for 170 cadets at the FAL military academy.

c. PEO training for 2,835 troops.

d. In addition to c, above, the deployment of LTAG elements to various FAL units.

e. On-the-job training and formal courses of instruction by the technical services.

(S) Msg, OSD to CHPEO Laos, DEF 993964, 12 Apr 61; (S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to SecDef, DA IN 104384, 16 Apr 61.

15 Apr CINCPAC informed Commander PACAF that Sarit had revoked the authorization to base RF-101s at Takhli for reconnaissance missions over Laos (see items 6 and 10 April). CINCPAC considered it infeasible to use Korat for RF-101s and therefore cancelled their deployment to Thailand and approved the alternative course calling for the use of RT-33s.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 151925Z Apr 61.

15 Apr The US Ambassador to Nationalist China informed the Secretary of State that Nationalist General Lai Ming-Tang, who had just returned from a visit to Thailand, had estimated that there were 600 to 700 KMTs in Laos including those in the Thailand border area. Some of these escapees, the General had added, appeared to have merged into the civilian economy of Laos.

(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 628, 15 Apr 61.

16 Apr Soviet Foreign Secretary Andrei Gromyko handed the British Ambassador to the USSR three draft messages on Laos which constituted the Soviet reply to the British drafts delivered to them on 5 April (see item). The Soviets, in their drafts, agreed to the British views on the time and place for holding an international conference on Laos. The conference was to open in Geneva on 5 May.

The Soviet drafts, while providing that the Geneva co-Chairmen "call on all military authorities, parties and organizations in Laos to cease fire before convening of the international conference," did not make the cease-fire a prerequisite to the convening of the conference. (See item 19 April, for the resolution of this point.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, CG-895, 19 Apr 61.

16 Apr

Ambassador Brown reported from Vientiane that Phoumi had shown disappointment upon seeing the text proposed by the Department of State for use by the RLG in requesting the US to establish a MAAG in Laos. This disappointment had contrasted with Phoumi's apparent pleasure on the previous day, when Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PEO had first conveyed to Phoumi the US Government's decision to lift restrictions on the presence of PEO and LTAG personnel in combat operations and on their wearing uniforms. On the earlier occasion Phoumi had apparently gotten the erroneous impression that the US was going to send troops into Laos. Having been disabused of this notion by the State Department's suggested text, Phoumi had conceded that the presence of US personnel in uniform in combat zones would be helpful tangible evidence of US support; but he had also raised the fundamental question whether LTAG personnel attached to the prospective MAAG were to be field advisers in uniform or were to participate in fighting as combat individuals. Ambassador Brown requested State Department clarification on this point. In addition, Phoumi had expressed a wish to make certain revisions in the text after consulting with the Prime Minister and the King.

Later in the day, the Department of State clarified for Ambassador Brown the role contemplated for LTAG personnel in Laos after establishment of a MAAG there. The LTAG personnel were to have the functions of 1) training FAL personnel, and 2) acting as technical and tactical advisers in the field at all levels and in all types of operations. They were not to be restricted from participating in combat as individuals should the situation require this; but in the combat areas they were to carry out their primary function as advisers, and this responsibility in itself would require that they not seek individual combat roles.

The foregoing, the Department said, should be the understanding of the US with Phoumi, but it should not be spelled out in the request of the RLG for a MAAG or in the reply of the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1871, 15 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1873, 16 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1118, 16 Apr 61.

16 Apr

In a report to CINCPAC, CHPEO described the situation east of Thakhek as having deteriorated since the loss of the village of Nhommarath on the previous day. The FAL commander in the area had been unable to "reestablish control of his demoralized troops" who had become, in the opinion of CHPEO, "an ineffective fighting force."



To retrieve the situation, CHPEO planned to advise Phoumi to commit an FAL paratroop battalion to the Thakhek area. CHPEO also requested CHJUSMAG Thailand to expedite the movement of Thai artillery units (see item 15 April) to Thakhek.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos, to CINCPAC, DA IN 104395, 16 Apr 61.

17 Apr

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS recommended terms of reference for the MAAG Laos. As set forth in these terms of reference, the primary mission of the MAAG was to assist the RLG armed forces and auto-defense forces in attaining the capability to 1) maintain internal security against Communist-inspired subversion and insurgency, and 2) provide maximum feasible initial resistance to Communist-inspired external aggression.

Having set forth the standard provisions for the organization and operation of a MAAG, CINCPAC included in the recommended terms of reference certain special provisions applying uniquely to the MAAG Laos. These special provisions permitted CHMAAG Laos to authorize personnel either permanently or temporarily attached to his MAAG to "participate in combat operations to provide leadership and guidance" for the FAL, and to "participate fully with FAL combat elements at all levels." It was "axiomatic," this portion of the terms of reference stated, that such personnel would be armed when in the field, and they "should not be restricted from participating in combat operations as individuals should the situation so require," but their primary function was that of advisers.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 172120Z Apr 61.

17 Apr

The Laotian King appeared "markedly unenthusiastic" and somewhat apprehensive of the consequences when Ambassador Brown informed him of the US decision to establish a MAAG in Laos. He would consider the proposal a good thing, the King said, if he thought it would scare the Soviets, but he was sure it would not. It would certainly lead to charges of intervention, belligerence, and imperialism, he went on, and possibly bring on a heavy counter-attack. Nevertheless, since Laos was tied to the US, Laos could only agree to what the US wanted.

Commenting on this interview in his report later the same day, Ambassador Brown observed that the King had been depressed by the unfavorable military situation, the weakness and ineptitude of the FAL and Boun Oum's Government, and the general prospects for the future.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1884, 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PEO were informed by Phoumi following the latter's consultations with the Prime Minister and the King, that the idea of requesting a MAAG in Laos had been approved in principle but required further consideration. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sopsaisana, who was present, agreed. The two Laotians promised their government's revisions of the State Department's suggested text by noon the next day.

In reporting this information, Ambassador Brown commented that both Phoumi and Sopsaisana had obviously been hedging and seeking to delay the proposed action. When the Ambassador had asked Phoumi point-blank if he had doubts about the proposal, Phoumi had replied in the negative but had said that the situation "might change to our advantage and it might be better to do it later." Both men had insisted that no public action be taken without their agreement. Noting the consistency of this attitude with the King's reaction and Phoumi's previously expressed disappointment, Ambassador Brown conjectured that it reflected the feeling that the establishment of a MAAG would expose Laos to greater risks without adequate guarantees at a time when its ability to resist was at the lowest ebb.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1886, 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge in Bangkok reported that he had called a Special Meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives (see item 18 April) to acquaint them with the Pathet Lao military threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) and to prepare for an early appeal from the RLG and a call for SEATO action under Article IV, paragraph 2. In addition, the Charge reported that he was coordinating with the Secretary General on a request for issuance of the Charter Yellow warning of Plan 5.

The Secretary of State approved this course of action later on the same day.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1868, and SecState to Bangkok, 1608, both 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

On behalf of the State Department the JCS requested CINCPAC to examine the desirability of retaining in civilian guise approximately 25 of the PEO military personnel when the MAAG Laos was activated, for the following reasons:

1. If all foreign military personnel should be withdrawn from Laos as a result of negotiations, it would be desirable to have a nucleus of experienced PEO personnel who could be retained as civilians.

2. The cover story for "surfacing" the PEO personnel by ostensibly recalling to active duty those who were reserve military personnel would in this way be more plausible than if the whole PEO organization (less genuine civilians) suddenly donned uniforms.

On 18 April CINCPAC commented that the first of the two reasons seemed a non sequitur in that there would be no purpose in maintaining PEO personnel in Laos, whatever kind of clothing they might wear, if military assistance were discontinued. As for the second reason, CINCPAC saw little merit in trying to create a cover story inasmuch as the true status of the military personnel

serving with the PEO had been known to "everybody" for a long time. Further, if part of the MAAG were civilian and part military, great confusion would result in its dealings with the Lao Ministry of National Security. Therefore, unless better reasons could be given than those already advanced for leaving part of the MAAG in civilian dress, CINCPAC preferred conversion of the entire military complement of the MAAG to uniformed status at the same time.

(On 19 April the JCS directed this latter course.)  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994286, 17 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 181941Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994471, 19 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Secretary of State called in the representatives of the SEATO powers separately to inform them of the "serious concern" with which the US viewed the Pathet Lao threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April). The fall of this strategic location would cut Laos in half at its narrow waist and bring Communist forces to the Thai border along the Mekong River. The Secretary also informed the SEATO representatives that he had approved the calling of a special meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives by the US Representative. At the meeting, the US Representative was to propose the declaration of the Charter Yellow warning phase of SEATO Plan 5 (see item 17 April).

On the same day, the US Representative to the SEATO Council reported to the Secretary of State that the British Representative had circulated at the special Council meeting the text of the Soviet reply to the British cease-fire proposal (see item 16 April). In view of the last-minute receipt of this reply and the uncertainty as to Soviet intentions pending study of the text, the US Representative agreed with the Secretary-General of SEATO not to request a declaration of Charter Yellow for the time being.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1617, 18 Apr 61; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1878, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed CINCPAC that the "current status of political negotiations and uncertainty as to US ability to provide adequate supervision," had led to the conclusion that the formation of an additional 40 auto-defense companies among Laotian minority groups (see item 14 April) "should be deferred at this time."

(S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 994458, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

According to the New York Times, Prince Souvanna Phouma "abruptly" canceled his trip to Washington. The cancellation apparently arose out of a conflict of schedules. Originally, Souvanna had planned to be in Washington on the 18th but, in order to confer with Khrushchev at his villa on the Black Sea, he had postponed his arrival until the evening of the 19th. This one day postponement meant that Souvanna would have been in Washington for consultations only on 20 April.

Although it had been "expected," the Times article continued, that President Kennedy would see Souvanna during his visit, there had been no advance commitment made in the formal invitation, nor in the subsequent

messages pointing out that Mr. Rusk would be away on a speaking engagement on 20 April. State Department officials said that when the 20 April conflict developed, they had made "discreet" suggestions to Souvanna that he finish his talks in Moscow and then come to Washington. The Prince had replied, in effect, that since Mr. Rusk would be out of town, and since there had been no assurance that President Kennedy would receive him, then it would be "best to cancel the trip entirely."

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2555, 18 Apr 61; (U) NYT, 19 Apr 61, 1, 4.

18 Apr

In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown of US Government approval of an increased ceiling for MAP-supported FAL forces (as recommended by the JCS - see item 11 April). Under the new ceiling, authorized strength of the FAL was 38,478.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1134, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

Ambassador Brown transmitted to the Secretary of State the text of the RLG request for a MAAG. This text, originally supplied by the State Department (see item 16 April), had been revised by the RLG. The Ambassador had accepted it as satisfactory. Arrangements had been made, the Ambassador continued, for the Laotian Government to make the request public on 19 April. PEO military personnel would go into uniform on 20 April.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1891, 18 Apr 61;

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1893, 18 April 61.

19 Apr

The British Ambassador to the USSR presented to Soviet Foreign Secretary Gromyko a proposed amendment to the Soviet draft proposals on Laos, an amendment intended to assure that the proposed cease-fire would become effective before the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on Laos and would be certified by the ICC. (See item 16 April for the Soviet proposal on this point.)

Gromyko objected to changes in the Soviet draft proposals, claiming they already clearly stated that a cease-fire should precede the holding of a conference. To the British objection that the Soviet draft did not provide for the ICC to certify the cease-fire, Gromyko replied that, once the Laotian antagonists had agreed to stop fighting, the ICC should be instructed by the Geneva co-Chairmen to go to Laos to supervise the cease-fire. These steps, insisted Gromyko, should be completed before the proposed conference met.

In an instruction to his ambassador to the US, the British Foreign Secretary stated that he felt strongly that the Soviet draft proposals should be accepted. Admittedly, the British position that there could be no negotiations until a cease-fire had become effective would not be safeguarded in writing if the Soviet texts were accepted. The USSR would, however, be committed to an immediate call for a cease-fire.

The alternatives to acceptance of the Soviet drafts, continued the Foreign Secretary, "were very unpleasant to contemplate." Any further negotiation over texts would probably have to be referred to the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists and would lead to long delays. The Royal Laotian Army was no longer reliable, with the

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result that the Soviets could apply great pressure for further concessions by launching a new PL offensive. Such an attack could probably only be contained by a SEATO intervention.

US Secretary of State Rusk, in an "informal statement of understanding" addressed to the British Government, stated that the US would have no objection to the British accepting the Soviet proposals. There were, however, "certain considerations . . . with respect to our position" that Her Majesty's Government should have clearly in mind. These were as follows:

1. The US would feel free "to act vigorously along present lines" until the cease-fire became effective.

2. To protect its own position, the US would probably want to make its position clear in a public statement following public announcement of the UK/USSR agreement on a cease-fire.

3. If the cease-fire was violated, the US would expect immediate consultations, including an approach to SEATO to take appropriate action.

4. The US wished to "register some concern" with regard to an apparent Soviet suggestion that, if the ICC failed to verify a cease-fire, the co-Chairmen would do so. The US would not agree to this arrangement because it would put the USSR in the position of judging the effectiveness of its own cease-fire.

(S) Msg, SecState Circulars, 1614, n.d.; and 1631, n.d.

19 Apr In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State requested the US Ambassador to Thailand to discuss with Sarit the preparation of Thai troops for rapid deployment into the Thakhek or Paksane areas of Laos if the threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) made a SEATO military invasion desirable.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1621, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr The US Department of State officially announced to the press that the Government of Laos had requested the establishment of a MAAG to assist in organizing the defense of Laos more effectively, and that the US was complying with this request. The US had been supplying military materiel to the Royal Lao forces, the announcement continued, and the additional assistance to be supplied through the MAAG "should help to redress the military imbalance in the country which has resulted from the continuing flow of materiel and personnel to the rebel forces over an extended period."

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1903, 19 Apr 61;  
(TS) Msg, SecState to USUN New York, 2074, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr Ambassador Bruce reported further on the reactions of Lord Home to the conversion of the PEO in Laos to a MAAG, scheduled for that date. Lord Home, Bruce said, was concerned on two grounds.

First, Home felt that the US action was scarcely in accordance with the mutual understanding Home considered

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to exist between the US and Britain to consult at every stage in regard to steps taken in Laos. He said that if matters ever reached the point at which implementation of SEATO Plan 5 became necessary, he must be in a position to demonstrate to both the British Cabinet and public that Britain had been consulted at every stage in the escalation of countermeasures in Laos; otherwise he would have trouble with the well-known British reluctance to become involve in military operations in that country. He hoped that paramilitary measures could prevent the need to implement the SEATO plan. In the British view, he said, an allied military venture in Laos had dismal prospects. He regretted the US-British differences in assessing the existing military situation there, stating that though the Pathet Lao had the capability to cut Laos in two, there was no evidence that it intended to do so.

His second ground of concern was what he considered to be the questionable logic of characterizing the conversion of the PEO to a MAAG as a purely paramilitary move. Nevertheless, he would argue strongly, if necessary, that the move was in fact paramilitary, and he hoped the US "could get away with this."

(TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4251, 19 Apr 61.

20 Apr

The Deputy Secretary of Defense furnished the Chairman of the JCS a written review of the status of the recommendations on Laos made by the JCS on 7, 11, and 13 April (see items). "As you are aware," the Deputy Secretary wrote, "favorable decisions have been made" on the following recommendations:

1. To provide additional T-6 aircraft in Laos.
2. 
3. To augment the Lao Army by seven battalions plus service troops.
4. To convert PEO personnel in Laos to an overt status.

The recommendation concerning the use of B-26s "at this time," the Deputy Secretary continued, had been disapproved (see next item).

The following recommendations were under consideration by the State Department:

1. To authorize Lao T-6s to use bombs.
2. To initiate discussions with the Government of Thailand for the establishment of a two-regiment reserve for use if necessary before the arrival of committed SEATO forces

With regard to the JCS recommendation for the use of armed helicopters (see item 11 April), the Deputy Secretary requested more information. (See next item for a JCS recommendation on the subject which evidently crossed in the mail the memorandum of the Deputy Secretary.)

(TS) Memo, Dep SecDef to CJCS, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, Encl to (TS) JCS 1992/966, 25 Apr 61.

20 Apr

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS in effect withdrew their recommendation of 11 April for the use of armed helicopters in Laos. They did so in the light of views furnished by CINCPAC. CINCPAC had stated that 1) helicopters could be most profitably used in a utility-airlift capacity; 2) addition of armament would reduce helicopter payload without compensating advantage; 3) augmentation of the helicopter complement at Udorn, whether armed or unarmed, would require personnel in excess of the 300-man ceiling currently imposed by the Government of Thailand upon the service unit at Udorn; and 4) armed air capability could be provided by B-26s better than by armed helicopters (see previous item).

(TS) JCSM-257-61 to SecDef, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/964, 18 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 152107Z Apr 61.

20 Apr

Ambassador Gavin reported from Paris that the French Foreign Minister, according to a Foreign Office spokesman, had the strongest reservations concerning the transformation of the PEO in Laos into a MAAG. Statements in the French press had alleged that the move had been co-ordinated with the French Government, and this circumstance, the spokesman had said, had forced France to say it had been informed but not consulted.

In regard to the 14-Nation Conference, the spokesman expressed the hope that the Western Powers would co-ordinate their views as soon as possible; otherwise, they would be at a serious disadvantage vis-a-vis a unified Soviet-bloc point of view. The latter, the spokesman thought, would probably prove an irresistible magnet to neutrals if the West were in disagreement.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4519, 20 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The British informed the Department of State that the Soviets had agreed to the issuance of the cease-fire appeal on 24 April, the request to Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the ICC, and the invitations to an international conference.

At the request of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, the opening date of the conference might be 12 May instead of 5 May. (The US agreed to this point.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1649, 21 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The JCS informed CINCPAC that, pursuant to verbal instructions from the Secretary of Defense, progress reports on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March) had been discontinued, because of the "substantial completion of the necessary related actions."

On the previous day, the JCS had submitted what proved to be their final progress report on the approved courses of action, detailing this "substantial completion" as follows:

1. (INCREASE MEO STRENGTH FROM 3,000 to 4,000 BY 1 APRIL.) Action completed. At least 5,000 Meos had been armed (see item 5 April), [REDACTED] had authorized the arming of an additional thousand.

2. (DOD SUPPLY 16 H-34 HELICOPTERS [REDACTED] FOR CAT USE.) Action completed (see item 29 March).



3. [REDACTED]

4. (MAINTENANCE AND BASE SUPPORT PERSONNEL (300) FOR HELICOPTERS.) Action completed (see item 26 March).

5. (DOD MAKE AVAILABLE FOUR C-130s TO CAT.) Action completed (see item 3 April).

6. [REDACTED]

7. [REDACTED]

8. (IN CASE OF URGENT SUPPLY REQUIREMENTS, USAF MAY RESUME DELIVERY DIRECT TO VIENTIANE (C-130). The JCS had on this day renewed their permission for CINCPAC to initiate such flights; the original permission, granted on 14 March (see item) had been suspended on 4 April (see item).

9. [REDACTED]

Action completed (see item 4 April).

10. (AUGMENT PEO LAOS AND JUSMAG THAILAND EACH BY APPROXIMATELY 100 PERSONNEL.) Action completed (see item 23 March).

11. (DEFENSE TO MAKE AVAILABLE B-26s PLUS NECESSARY SPARES.) Fifteen B-26s were in Thailand; one was under repair on Okinawa (see Addendum 1 below).

12. [REDACTED]  
Fifteen crews were in WESTPAC; three additional pilots were enroute and fourteen were in training, with completion of training anticipated by 22-23 April (see Addendum 2 below).

13. [REDACTED]

14. (STATE DRAFT INSTRUCTIONS TO AMB BROWN FOR APPROVAL BY PRESIDENT.) Action completed by a Department of State message of 11 March.

15. (CHPEO PRESS PHOUMI TO LIFT QUALITY OF FAL LEADERSHIP.) Action completed (see item 21 March).

16. [REDACTED]

Actions under these items were automatically and successively completed as the aircraft were delivered (see courses 2, 3, and 7 above).

18. (GET SARIT APPROVAL B-26 OPERATIONS FROM THAI BASES.) Action completed (see items 4 April for the

initiation of this action, 6 April for completion).

Addendum 1. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 13 March), 16 additional B-26s had been "demothballed." Two, configured for photo reconnaissance, had arrived in Thailand, the remainder were being held in the US in flyable condition (see course 11 above).

Addendum 2. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 3 April), sixteen additional B-26 pilots were being "recruited"; the necessary refresher training of these pilots would be completed on 22-23 April (see course 12 above).

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994593, 21 Apr 61, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994500, 20 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The Departments of State and Defense, in a joint message, provided the following guidance to the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok on the status of political actions required in connection with SEATO Plan 5 (see item 13 April):

1. The SEATO Council of Representatives need not approve the appointment of military commanders. The Military Advisers should concur in the appointments and "reach agreement out of session."

2. The US continued strongly to support the appointment of an Australian as political adviser.

3. The question of cost-sharing was still under consideration in Washington. In the meantime, the US representative should seek action in the Council of Representatives to assure the Thais they would not be expected to sustain the costs of foreign troops stationed in or staging through Thailand.

4. A skeleton status of forces agreement should be in effect at the time Plan 5 was implemented.

5. The Military Advisers had approved force contributions under Plan 5; no further action by the Council of Representatives was required. (On 27 April, CINCPAC concurred in this guidance.)

(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1634, 21 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 270300Z Apr 61.

21 Apr

Ambassador Brown requested the Department of State to pass the following information to the Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. The Army Attache in Vientiane had been told by the FAL Chief of Staff and two of his commanders that: 1) with the exception of 100-200 Chinese Nationalist irregulars who had fled to more remote areas to avoid evacuation to Taiwan, all irregulars had left Laos; 2) there were no KMT in the FAL; and 3) although there was considerable movement of Chinese Communists along the Laos--Yunnan border, their forces had not entered Laos.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-87, 21 Apr 61.

21-22  
Apr

The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam submitted to the Secretary of State two sets of recommendations for making control and supervision of a neutral status for Laos

effective. One set of recommendations was a proposed revision of the Geneva Accords prepared by the Canadian ICC delegation for the use of the Canadian Government at the international conference on Laos; the other had been prepared by the US Embassy in Saigon. Both were based on the experience with the ICC in Viet Nam.

The Canadian proposal was intended to put real teeth in the control and supervision powers of the ICC if it were called upon by the conference to supervise a cease-fire in Laos and to ensure that Laos remained completely neutral. The most significant provisions were as follows:

- (1) ICC given authority to issue instructions to High Commands of both sides who will be directly responsible to ICC.
- (2) All foreign military advisers and training cadres and all foreign troops, "regular to irregular," to leave Laos.
- (3) Introduction all armaments, munitions and military equipment of all kinds prohibited and all such items now in Laos, except as required for security forces, to be exported under ICC control. (Those foreign countries who have supplied war material may arrange recovery with ICC.)
- (4) Movement in or out of Laos of any military personnel, foreign or national, or war materials prohibited except by arrangement with ICC.
- (5) In order assure absence reprisals against persons for past activities, punishment even under civil law for acts during hostilities subject to approval of and investigation by ICC.
- (6) All prisoners of war and civilian internees of Lao or other nationality be released under supervision ICC.
- (7) There be fixed teams and mobile teams, number and location of former to be decided and changed as required by ICC. Mobile teams to be concerned with frontier regions but will have right move freely anywhere without agreement of either party or new government when it is formed.
- (8) ICC be provided with and have full control over all necessary means of transport and communication including vehicles, fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, river craft and communications equipment.
- (9) Both parties and new government obligated put at disposal of ICC any forces considered necessary to assure security of ICC and its teams.
- (10) Control, observation, inspection, investigation and supervision functions, designed insure implementation of agreement by both parties and new government, shall be exercised with regard any allegations or suspicions regarding violations of agreement.

The recommendations of the US Embassy in Saigon contained the following points which were believed to be "essential if effective control mechanism [was] to be established":

1. Control teams should have authority to inspect and control anywhere in Laos with or without permission of both sides. The control teams should also be authorized to operate with only a majority of a given team participating.
2. The Control Commission should have adequate transportation of its own to go anywhere in Laos.
3. All control teams should be mobile and be able to go anywhere in Laos at any time. The teams should be able to investigate alleged violations on the ground as well as to examine documentary evidence.
4. Terms of reference for the Control Commission should include adequate provisions relating to subversion.
5. As the weight of world opinion was virtually the only sanction available to the control mechanism, the Control Commission should be required to publish its considerations and findings once a month in order to keep world attention focused on Control Commission activities.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1630, 22 Apr 61;  
(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1629, 21 Apr 61.

22 Apr

In a message to Ambassador Brown, the Secretary of State explained US views on a cease-fire in Laos. If a cease-fire became effective, the FAL should not merely return to barracks but should be prepared to react vigorously to any infraction by the Pathet Lao. In addition, the cease-fire should be considered an opportunity to 1) restore confidence and unity among non-Communist factions, 2) undertake an energetic training program for the FAL and, 3) organize "FAL-Information-Aid" teams to infiltrate territory nominally held by the Pathet Lao, "fly flag in as broad areas as possible, and to permit the RLG to claim these areas under its control."

While observance of the cease-fire would mean setting up demarcation lines, continued the Secretary of State, the RLG should avoid recognizing any division of the country and should claim as much territory as possible. Cease-fire talks should, in the opinion of the US, be limited to "just that," and avoid raising any "question of substance" prior to the 14-Nation Conference.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1660, 22 Apr 61.

22 Apr

In a circular message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State announced that US policy was now to stand "four-square behind [the] Boun Oum Government." This policy was based on evidence that the King was unwilling to assume leadership (see item 12 April) and on the fear that "further pressures" to form a new government would only undermine the morale of the RLG.

The principal preoccupation of the US, continued the Secretary, was whether a peaceful settlement could be found that would preserve Laos from Communist control, or whether military intervention would be necessary to prevent a Communist takeover. In either event, the US must have a non-Communist government of Laos that would support US positions, at least until the Communists revealed what kind of Laos they would be willing to accept.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1659, 22 Apr 61.

22 Apr



(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1901, 22 Apr 61;  
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1639, 22 Apr 61.

22 Apr

Embassy Counselor Edward L. Freers reported from Moscow that the press in the Soviet capital had thus far shown only slight interest in the establishment of the MAAG in Laos. Only one minor paper had contained any reference to the MAAG. This paper had printed 1) a London Tass item reporting that the British press doubted the move would help end the Laotian crisis, and 2) a New York Tass item commenting that the forthcoming appearance of uniformed American officers in Laos reflected falling morale among Phoumi's troops.

(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2609, 22 Apr 61.

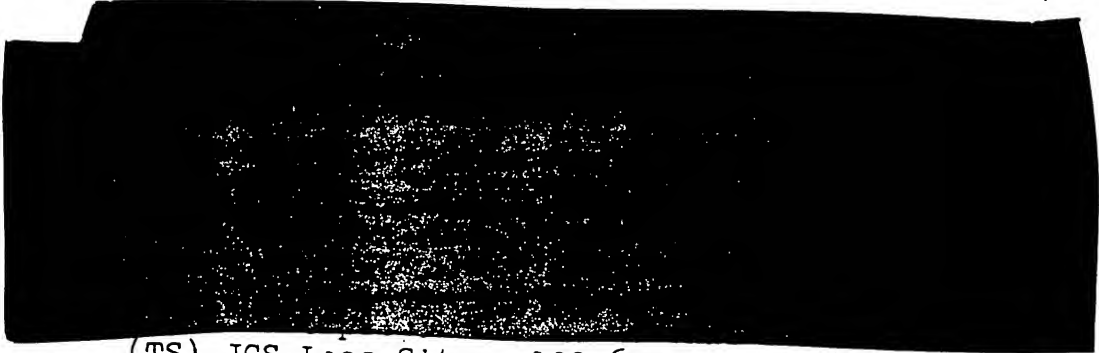
23 Apr

Vang Vieng fell to the Pathet Lao. As a result of this defeat, Phoumi requested of CHPEO, and CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC, the following: 1) permission to use bombs against the enemy troops on Route 13 and the Vang Vieng airfield; and 2) the provision of airlift to move reinforcements to the area south of Vang Vieng.

Commenting to the Secretary of State on the fall of Vang Vieng, Ambassador Brown stated that the Pathet Lao was now in an ideal position with respect to a cease-fire. The PL now threatened Luang Prabang, Thakhek, Pakxane and Vientiane. However, the PL had refrained from advancing to the banks of the Mekong, where, as the PL must know, it would meet "outside responses."

Since, however, it was not certain that the PL would continue to act cautiously, Ambassador Brown requested that Phoumi be given authority to employ bombs as requested, if the cease-fire call were delayed, or if the US officials in Laos saw "definite evidence" that the enemy proposed to move upon Vientiane or "other major objectives."

The Department of State granted this authority on the same day, stipulating only that the authority would become subject to "Washington instruction" after the RLG had issued its declaration implementing the UK-USSR call for a cease-fire (see item 25 April).



(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 109-61, 23 Apr 61; (TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 106753, 23 Apr 61; Vientiane to SecState, 1921, 23 Apr 61; Bangkok to SecState, 1907, 23 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1153, 23 Apr 61.

23 Apr

CHMAAG requested that CINCPAC obtain authority for the employment in reconnaissance over Laos of the RB-26 for medium-level photographic reconnaissance and the B-26 for low-level visual and hand-camera reconnaissance.

On the same day the JCS supplied the requisite authority for the RB-26 missions. These missions, as well as the previously authorized RT-33 missions (see item 6 April), were authorized until acceptance of a cease-fire was announced by the RLG.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 106768, 23 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 231845Z Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994700, 23 Apr 61.

23-24  
Apr

The US Ambassador to Laos submitted to the Secretary of State a summary of a memorandum outlining the procedures the RLG was to follow after receiving the appeal for a cease-fire from the Geneva co-Chairmen. The memorandum, prepared by the British Ambassador to Laos and given by him to General Phoumi, contained the following points:

1. Upon receipt of the appeal, the RLG was to issue a statement accepting it wholeheartedly, announcing that the FAL would comply as soon as agreement could be reached with the other side as to the hour and date when the cease-fire would begin, and proposing a meeting between military representatives of the two sides at a specified time and place.

~~TOP SECRET~~

2. The objectives of this first contact would be to propose a meeting of high-level military representatives to discuss general policy questions concerning a cease-fire, and to propose that, in each sector, military representatives of the two sides meet to arrange detailed application of measures agreed to at the high level in their respective areas.

3. As soon as the RLG had made its statement accepting the cease-fire appeal, it would request the British to transmit the statement to the Soviets.

In reply to the US Ambassador's message, the Secretary of State endorsed, in general, the mechanics for a cease-fire proposed by the British Ambassador and suggested that Luang Prabang be the place for the initial meeting of military representatives of the two sides.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1923, 1924, both 23 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1156, 24 Apr 61.

24 Apr

Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, appealed for a cease-fire in Laos, requested Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the ICC for the purpose of certifying when the cease-fire was effective, and issued invitations to a 14-Nation Conference to be held in Geneva on 12 May. The texts were essentially those proposed by the Soviets on 16 April (see item).

(C) Msg, SecState Circular 1665, 24 Apr 61; NYT, 25 Apr 61, 1.

24 Apr

In a circular message, the Secretary of State described US preliminary thoughts concerning an international conference on Laos as follows:

1. At the outset there would probably be a sharp disagreement over the seating of rival Laotian delegations, with the result that none would be seated. There might then be agreement to seat the rival factions as observers only. If the Communists then moved for a coalition government, the US would be opposed and would advise the Boun Oum Government of firm US support.

2. In the event that the competence of the ICC to verify compliance with the cease-fire was questioned, the US would propose that, where military forces were in contact, the aggressor force should withdraw at least two kilometers.

3. With regard to arms deliveries, the US believed that the best approach was not to consider any limitation until after the conference had established an effective functioning mechanism for supervision of arms deliveries. The US would, in any event, retain its military advisers and trainers with the FAL until another suitable arrangement for military advice and training could be made.



4. The US was tentatively contemplating offering an "overall package" calling for disarming all but a 20,000-man internal security force, equipped and trained under the guidance of a military affairs commission.

5. The US would propose that economic assistance be planned and supervised by an enlarged UN economic mission for Laos. Another approach might be to establish a Development Assistance Agency composed of such countries of the area as Malaya, India, Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia.

6. The US would insist on an effective international control mechanism, with access to all parts of the country to investigate and report on armed subversion and illegal importation of arms or military personnel.

7. If the conference agreed to effective measures for neutralizing Laos, then the US would be willing to consider a conference recommendation for a provisional Laotian government balanced between left and right--either including both extremes or excluding them both.

8. The US opposed early elections because the Pathet Lao would be able to influence the electorate through subversion and military power. The US position might be to postpone elections until the RLG considered that an adequate degree of order had been restored.

The Secretary of State authorized the US Ambassadors to Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam to discuss the above points of "preliminary US thinking" with the respective governments. In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to explain the need for lining up maximum support of India, Burma, and Cambodia--the three Asian neutral participants in the Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState Circular, 1674, 24 Apr 61.

24 Apr

The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed Secretary Rusk that Premier Chou En-Lai, speaking at a banquet for Souvanna the previous day, had declared that the establishment of a MAAG in Laos was a "serious step" in US preparation for "direct participation in civil war."

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1670, 24 Apr 61.

25 Apr

The RLG issued a document entitled "Declaration of RLG After Receipt of Call for Cease-Fire in Laos." In this declaration, the RLG announced that the Chief of General Staff of the National Army was "ready to make contact at any time with [the] responsible chief of opposing forces to come to agreement on the day and hour of an effective cease-fire."

In spite of heavy pressure from the US and British Ambassadors, Phoumi refused to specify a time and place for the initial meeting of military

representatives on the ground that to do so would be to give the appearance of begging for a cease-fire. The most he would do was to request the British to transmit to the Pathet Lao, through the Soviets, a statement that the RLG considered Luang Prabang to be the best place for a meeting of military representatives. The RLG was prepared to meet there at any time.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1934, 25 Apr 61;  
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1933, 25 Apr 61;  
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1932, 25 Apr 61.

25 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US. Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported the views of the Thai Foreign Minister concerning the proposed international conference on Laos. The Foreign Minister had expressed doubts as to whether Thailand would be represented at the Conference. An effective cease-fire in Laos was a prerequisite to Thai attendance. The Foreign Minister was of the opinion that Thailand could not afford to be unrepresented and that attendance would not bind Thailand to accept the conclusions of the Conference.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1912, 25 Apr 61.

25 Apr

The Secretary of State, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] informed Ambassador Brown that, subject to the Ambassador's comments, the Department of State's views on the disposition of non-Lao personnel in Laos in the event of a cease-fire were as follows:

1. In view of the threat of the PL to the "vital centers" on the Mekong River, nothing should be done to reduce FAL capabilities by withdrawing non-Lao personnel.

2. The ICC should limit itself to verification of a cease-fire; any expansion of this role, such as control of foreign personnel and arms deliveries should be taken up at the 14-Nation Conference.

3. Therefore, all non-Lao personnel should remain with the FAL until an effective control mechanism had been established by the Conference.

4. The MAAG should remain in place until the satisfactory new security system had been established. (See item 29 April for detailed recommendations of US officials in Laos concerning, specifically, Thai personnel.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1908, 24 Apr 61;  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1163, 25 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The RLG having announced its acceptance of a cease-fire (see item 25 April), Ambassador Brown requested authorization to continue RB-26 reconnaissance flights as a means of determining enemy intentions until the cease-fire had been effectively established. The Department of State granted this authority on the same day.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Through military channels, CHMAAG requested that both RB-26 and RT-33 flights be continued; CINCPAC authorized CHMAAG to continue missions with both types of aircraft unless otherwise directed. (On 28 April, the JCS, with State and Defense concurrence, granted authority for both RB-26 and RT-33 missions until the cease-fire became effective.)

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 261835Z Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995035, 28 Apr 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1938, 26 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1169, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi was pleading for authorization to use his aircraft for bombing. CHMAAG's estimate of the situation was that the FAL was "on the ropes" and that the PL would be able to capture any of the major population centers held by the FAL. If the enemy should decide to exploit this capability, CHMAAG concluded, the use of B-26s and US or SEATO intervention would be necessary to stop him.

CINCPAC realized that the announcement of acceptance of the cease-fire by the RLG had removed the discretion for use of bombs from Ambassador Brown to Washington (see item 23 April). He requested, therefore, that the JCS provide immediate authorization to release bombs to Phoumi (see items 29 and 30 April).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107585, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 261847Z Apr 61.

26 Apr

Muong Sai, an FAL outpost in northern Laos, was captured by the Pathet Lao. Ambassador Brown, relaying this intelligence to the Secretary of State, reported in addition that the FAL forces north of Vientiane were of low morale and were likely to "dissolve" if struck hard. Their "dissolution," reported Brown, would leave open the way to Vientiane.

The US could not afford, according to Brown, to allow the enemy to continue his forward movement toward key Laotian centers "beyond a certain point." There was, moreover, no way that Brown could see to stop this advance except by the use of B-26s, "probably followed by US or SEATO troops." The Ambassador requested, therefore, that he be given authority to employ B-26s if 1) the enemy moved south of Nam Lik (a river between Vang Vieng and Vientiane), or 2) the enemy threatened to occupy the terrain commanding any of the major centers near the Mekong Valley.

On the same day CHMAAG, who had earlier recommended to Ambassador Brown that authority to use B-26s be secured, stated to CINCPAC that he considered the B-26s should be employed not only against enemy troop movements toward the major centers in the Mekong Valley, but against the Plaine des Jarres installations, in order to produce the maximum effect.

~~TOP SECRET~~

The Department of State's reply to Brown was immediate. The President had decided that the request for B-26 action should be disapproved (see following item).

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 112-61, 26 Apr 61;  
 (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1943, 26 Apr 61;  
 (TS) Msg, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The Acting Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, because of Brown's description of the situation in Laos (see item above), and also because of bellicose statements by the Chinese Communists and Kong Le, the situation had been assessed in Washington as "most serious." Accordingly, a meeting had been held with the President, and the following actions had resulted:

1. The President had telephoned Ambassador Bruce in London, asking him to inform Prime Minister Macmillan immediately of these developments and to seek Macmillan's views on what actions were required. Bruce had done this and Macmillan had suggested that Phoumi should immediately make public a call for a meeting on the cease-fire, stipulating time and place. If there were no response, the other side would bear the onus for continued hostilities.

2. The President had also called in the British and French Ambassadors to point out the seriousness of the situation and had dispatched a letter in the same vein to Prime Minister Nehru.

3. The President had decided the following:

- a. CINCPAC would be instructed to "move naval forces into Gulf of Siam [and] South China Sea."

- b. Forces earmarked for air movement into Laos under SEATO Plan 5 would be alerted.

- c. The US Ambassador to the UN was authorized to explore with the UK, French, and Lao representatives the possibility of immediate Security Council action, under conditions previously agreed upon by the US & UK (see item 8 April), to reinforce the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire.

The Acting Secretary laid upon Brown the "difficult" task of impressing upon the RLG the "absolute need" of maintaining as advantageous a military position as possible while at the same time showing itself amenable to compliance with a cease-fire request. Although Phoumi should not, according to the Acting Secretary, acquiesce in the demands of Kong Le and Souvanna for meeting in a place or under conditions of their choosing, he should set a time when he would be willing to meet their representatives on neutral ground to fix a de facto cease-fire.

Further, it was very important that the RLG maintain its posture as the uncompromised legitimate and constitutional government of Laos, so that its credentials would not be "subject to legitimate question" in the event UN action was required. In addition, it was important that the RLG not make hasty concessions to Souvanna. If made, such concessions would undermine the RLG position at the 14-Nation Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

As a result of decisions reached at a White House meeting (see preceding item), the JCS instructed CINCPAC to:

1. Deploy naval carrier forces to support SEATO Plan 5.
2. Move amphibious forces into positions in the Gulf of Siam within 12 hours steaming of Bangkok, but not to land unless further ordered.
3. Be prepared to call off SEATO exercise Pony Express.
4. Be prepared to land at Seno or other areas of Southern Laos in order to hold Southern Laos; and to land forces in South Viet Nam and Thailand, if Vientiane should have fallen before SEATO Plan 5 could be executed (see item 29 April).
5. Be prepared to take measures to stop Red Chinese intervention, including strikes on intermediate bases in North Viet Nam and, if necessary, on bases in Red China which support operations against Laos.

There was a "reluctance," the JCS stated, "to use nuclear weapons initially, and their use [was] still subject to later decision." ("Later decision remains the President's.")

(TS) Msgs, OCJCS to Chief, USELM CENTO Ankara (for CJCS), JCS 994928, 26 Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994935, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The Secretary of State directed the US Delegate to the UN to consult immediately with his British and French colleagues in preparation for a possible "move" in the UN Security Council on the Laotian situation. This move, if taken, would be intended to 1) apply pressure to the Communists immediately to "establish in fact" a cease-fire in Laos, and 2) improve the US position in world opinion in the event of a SEATO military intervention in that country.

In consultations with his British and French colleagues, the US Delegate was to propose the following:

1. A joint US/British (and possibly French) request for an immediate meeting of the Security Council. At the meeting these two (or three) powers would propose that the Security Council express itself "in favor of an immediate cease-fire, verified by the ICC and followed by a conference designed to bring about and maintain a neutral Laos."

2. A resolution which would call for a cease-fire verified by the ICC and the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on 12 May. (By whom and under what circumstances the resolution would be introduced is not clear from available documentation.)

(S) Msg, SecState to USUN, 2120, 26 Apr 61.

27 Apr

As an aftermath of Ambassador Brown's request for authority to employ B-26s (see item 26 April), CINCPAC, noting the disparity between the missions planned for the B-26s by the Ambassador and by CHMAAG, requested that the JCS cause an order to be sent to Brown directing that he "not interfere with the military commander once military action is joined and is being conducted in accordance with agreed objectives." CINCPAC termed it "militarily unrealistic to accept restrictions which stem from the Ambassador's interpretation of guidance received from [Washington]."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 272037Z Apr 61.

27 Apr

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 26 April), the US Delegate to the UN met with his French and British colleagues to discuss an early meeting of the Security Council on Laos. As reported by the US Delegate, both his colleagues were opposed to such a meeting. The British Delegate had stated that his government was strongly opposed to an appeal to the UN on the grounds that such an action would negate the joint efforts of the British and the Soviets to bring about a cease-fire. The French Delegate had opposed a Security Council meeting because it 1) would not alter the military situation, 2) would allow the USSR to postpone a cease-fire by engaging in lengthy debate, 3) would provide an opportunity for agitation against the West, and 4) would provoke unwise debate on the legitimacy of the Laotian Government.

(At subsequent meetings of the three UN delegates on 28 and 29 April, the British and French reiterated their opposition to a Security Council meeting on Laos.)

(S) Msgs, USUN to SecState, 3014, 3023, 3031, 27, 28, 29 Apr 61.

27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported a conversation on Laos with President De Gaulle. The Ambassador had expressed the deep concern of the US with regard to Laos, pointing out that, if the Communists continued to attack, all of Laos would be

lost and there would be "nothing to negotiate at the conference table." De Gaulle agreed and said that Foreign Minister de Murville had just informed the Soviet Ambassador that the French Government would like the Soviets to "take what steps they could to have the Communist forces in Laos cease fighting."

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4698, 27 Apr 61.

27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the RLG was broadcasting a press statement by Phoumi, announcing that the Chief of Staff of the FAL was ready to meet the responsible chief of the opposing forces at Luang Prabang at 0800, 28 April to determine the effective date of a cease-fire.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1946 and 1951, both 27 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The ICC Laos, answering the call of the Geneva co-Chairmen (see item 24 April), reconvened at New Delhi, with Chairman S. Sen of India presiding. Prime Minister Nehru, in a welcoming address, emphasized to the delegates that a cease-fire must exist if the ICC and the Geneva Conference were to be able to function: it would be "impossible to negotiate in [an] ever changing situation." In reply, the Canadian delegate stated categorically that the cease-fire was a pre-condition for the Geneva Conference; the Polish delegate responded that he believed the cease-fire would be operative in "several days." The Pole then blamed the deterioration of Laotian conditions on "those who brought about adjournment of ICC and involvement of Laos in military pacts against socialist world."

(OUO) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2526, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr

British Prime Minister Macmillan, in a letter to President Kennedy, suggested that the US bring pressure to bear on Phoumi to propose a cease-fire meeting in "no man's land." Pointing out that Luang Prabang, the place proposed by Phoumi for a cease-fire meeting (see item 27 April), was within RLG-controlled territory, Macmillan argued that such an offer was "no way to arrange [a] cease-fire between enemies." Unless an RLG offer to meet the PL in territory controlled by neither side was made and refused, it would be difficult to claim that negotiations had broken down. Macmillan informed the President that he was instructing the British Ambassador to Laos to "speak on these lines" (see next item).

In reply, the President pointed out that, in view of a demand by rebel commander Kong Le that Phoumi appear at Xieng Khouang, the RLG leader's proposal for a meeting in Luang Prabang was the logical one. In addition, the rebels had not denied their allegiance to the King, so a meeting in the royal capital might have been possible had the rebels been willing.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 29 Apr 61.



~~TOP SECRET~~

28 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had urged Phoumi to take a further initiative in seeking a cease-fire. Acting on instructions from the Foreign Office (see preceding item), the British diplomat had proposed that, since there had been no reply to the proposal for a meeting at Luang Prabang (see item 27 April), the RLG should make a new proposal for military representatives to meet under a flag of truce at a specified point where opposing forces were in actual contact.

Acting on the British Ambassador's advice, the RLG broadcast a proposal the same day that such a meeting take place on 29 April at a point two kilometers north of Ban Vang Khi on Route 13.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1957, 1960, 1968, all 28 Apr 61; and 1988 and 1976, both 29 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The Secretary of State requested the US Ambassadors to Cambodia, India, and Burma to begin discussions with the governments to which they were accredited for the purpose of lining up the general support of these neutral Asian Nations for the US position at the international conference on Laos. The specific purpose of these "preliminary and exploratory" discussions should be to 1) acquaint the neutral nations of the importance the US attached to their role at the conference in insuring an independent and neutral Laos, 2) determine their attitudes on Laotian problems and on the conference, and 3) prepare the way for continued discussions and liaison.

In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to stress that, in the opinion of the US, the Conference would be a turning point for uncommitted Asian Nations. If these countries could support realistic measures for a truly neutral and adequately safeguarded Laos, there would be hope for stopping the Communist advance by peaceful means. Failure to establish a neutral and independent Laos at the Conference, on the other hand, would inevitably mean a falling back on primarily military efforts to defend the area.

Effective action by the Asian neutrals to protect their own interests was becoming particularly important because the Communists appeared to be challenging the whole concept of neutrality in the cold war. They had been pushing the theory that the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa were merely a third bloc that either supported the Communists (in which case it was tolerated) or supported the Free World (in which case it was opposed). In the US view, the conference would offer the Asian neutrals an opportunity to strengthen their position by proving they could play a vital role in an area where their own interests were directly involved.

Finally, the Ambassadors were to state that, while the US recognized the existence of different points of view with regard to the Laotian problem, it believed there was agreement on the fundamental objective of preserving the independence of Laos from Communist control. The US hoped, therefore, for a regular and frank exchange of views with regard to means for achieving the objective. Specifically, the US Government would appreciate an expression of the views of Cambodia, Burma, and India on 1) means for supervising and controlling a neutral status for Laos, 2) means for giving economic assistance to Laos without jeopardizing its neutrality, and 3) means for providing Laos with armed forces necessary for internal security.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1703, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr CHMAAG Laos requested, and CINCPAC granted, authorization to utilize C-130s with USAF markings and crews to airlift one FAL battalion from Laos to Koke Kathiem (Thailand). CHMAAG also requested authority to use these C-130s "whenever urgency of the situation dictates," with CINCPAC to be advised of each mission after the fact. CINCPAC granted this request only for flights into Vientiane and Seno and then only after other resources were fully committed and the requirement had been established to CHMAAG's personal satisfaction.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108399, 28 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 281905Z Apr 61.

28 Apr The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported to the Secretary of State that he had proposed at a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives, that the Council seek immediate instructions to issue the "Charter Yellow" alert warning of SEATO Plan 5. This action was taken because of the serious deterioration of the military situation in Laos, as reported by the US Ambassador to that country (see item 26 April).

In response to this US proposal all members of the Council agreed to seek instructions from their governments.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1925 and 1936, 27, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr According to a message from the US Ambassador to Laos to the Secretary of State, CHMAAG Laos had been informed that the FAL truce representative had attempted but failed to make contact with representatives of the opposing forces (see item 28 April).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1969, 29 Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~

29 Apr Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassadors in London and Moscow to inform the British Foreign Secretary and the Soviet Foreign Minister, respectively, that US acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to attend the conference in Geneva was contingent upon an "immediate and effective cease fire" in Laos.

(Ambassador Bruce conveyed this information to the British Foreign Office on 30 April.)

(OUO) Msg, SecState to London, 5104, and to Moscow, 1869, 29 Apr 61; (S) Msg, London to SecState, 4407, 30 Apr 1961.

29 Apr The National Security Council 1) discussed the Laotian situation, including the considerations involved in "various alternative" courses of action, and 2) agreed to undertake "certain military and diplomatic measures" before the next meeting of the NSC (scheduled for 1 May), including consultations on the progress of the cease-fire negotiations, on the International Control Commission, and on possible action in the UN and SEATO.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2415, 29 Apr 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

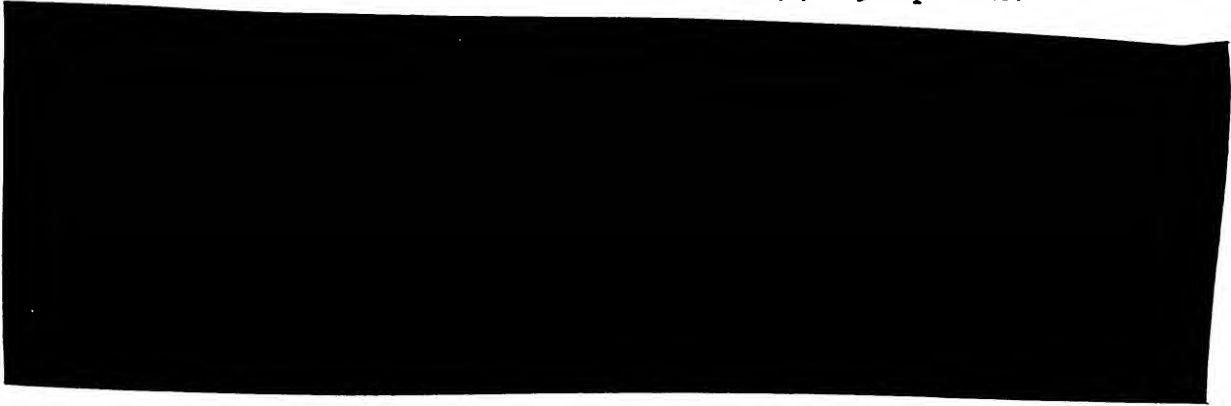
29 Apr The JCS, in an implementation of the White House decisions of 26 April (see item), requested that CINCPAC prepare plans to move brigade-size forces of approximately 5,000 men each into Udorn (Thailand) and Tourane (South Viet Nam). The planned forces were to include all appropriate military elements and consist of US forces only (see item 1 May).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995131, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr The JCS requested the recommendations of CINCPAC concerning possible augmentation of the MAAG Laos prior to any agreement by an international conference on new control machinery. The request assumed 1) agreement on a cease-fire would be reached, and 2) the mission of the ICC would be limited to verification of the cease-fire. The purpose of augmenting the MAAG, the JCS said, would be to intensify FAL training, stiffen and maintain the morale of the FAL and RLG, demonstrate continued US support, and, if the conference following a cease-fire should fail, place the US in as favorable position as possible for continuing its advisory effort.

(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995134, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr





(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 292005Z Apr 61;  
CHMAAG Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 107997,  
27 Apr 61; CHMAAG Thailand to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN  
107816, 26 Apr 61; [REDACTED]

29 Apr

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS his assessment of Soviet intentions in Laos, and a list of proposed measures designed to thwart Soviet plans.

CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc, by stalling diplomatic negotiations, had demonstrated already an intent to "squeeze [the] last drop" from the military advantage enjoyed by the PL/Kong Le/Viet Minh group. CINCPAC could "see no adequate force which can be applied through RLG which will cause Sovbloc to switch to cease-fire without demand for unacceptable conditions." Further, CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc would continue to apply pressure in the expectation of the disintegration of the RLG and FAL prior to any cease-fire.

~~TOP SECRET~~

To prevent such a disintegration, CINCPAC concluded, military counter pressure must be applied; "further futile political demarches" would not suffice. CINCPAC therefore proposed the following series of actions by the US:

1. An announcement to other SEATO members that the US was moving immediately under SEATO Plan 5 and expected the other members to join in this action.
  2. The immediate movement of two US BLTs and one Thai battalion to Vientiane.
  3. The placing within 24 hours of one Thai battalion at Thakhek.
  4. The movement of one US BLT into Seno within 3-4 days.
  5. The deployment of air forces to Thailand.
  6. The presentation of a statement to the USSR that the US would not allow Laos to be overrun, but that the US was still prepared to accept a cease-fire and the neutralization of the country.
  7. Preparation to have SEATO forces remain in Laos "until the situation is restored."
  8. Preparation to counter any subsequent moves by Communist China, the USSR, or North Viet Nam.
- (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290125Z Apr 61.

29 Apr

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State the views of the French Foreign Office on Laos as expressed by the Director of Asian Affairs. The military situation, according to the Director, was bad but not catastrophic. No action in the UN or SEATO, which might prove irreversible once started, should be taken for a couple of days. Meanwhile, the French government was exerting all possible pressure on the Soviets, the Burmese, Sihanouk, and, "if they can locate him, Souvanna." (The previous day the French Ambassador in Washington had told the Secretary of State that the French Ambassador to Laos had been instructed to urge Souvanna to use his influence with the Pathet Lao to bring about a cease-fire.)

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4734, 29 Apr 61; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, during a conversation with the Burmese Minister to Laos on the previous evening, the Burmese diplomat had 1) reiterated his government's concern over the possibility of a Communist Laos, and 2) requested US opinions on the Conference and a possible coalition government in Laos. The US Ambassador had replied that until the US had "tested" the opposition's objectives at the Conference, and discovered what safeguards and assurances the Communists were willing to accept to provide for a truly neutral Laos, the US was opposed to any efforts to find a "compromise" government.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the Burmese Minister has expressed his government's desire to persuade

friendly Asians, for example, India, Burma, Cambodia, to "work on Souvanna elements to keep them on track."  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1973, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr

According to the Bangkok World, on 28 April the Thai Foreign Ministry had issued a statement concerning the participation of Thailand in the conference on Laos. The official communique declared that Thailand's acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to participate in the 14-nation meeting depended upon the following conditions:

1. First, there must be an absolute cessation of supply by Communist countries of war materiel and technicians to pro-Communist rebels.

2. After the first step had been accomplished, there must be verified cease-fire. The cease-fire must be "lasting," and one that could definitely be checked.

If these conditions were fulfilled, the statement pointed out, then Thailand would make a decision concerning participation in the conference.

It was clear, the communique declared, that the main objective of the Communists was to expand their area of occupation in Laos with a view to gaining a "political advantage and tightening their political stand at the conference."

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1945, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr

The Secretary of State dispatched the following message to Ambassador Brown: "Authority granted to release bombs to Phoumi for use on his T-6 aircraft until effective cease-fire is realized" (see item 30 April).  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1192, 29 Apr 61.

29-30  
Apr

The Secretary of State called in the British Charge d'Affaires and the French Ambassador for consultations regarding the failure of the Pathet Lao to begin negotiations for a cease-fire. The Secretary pointed out that, not only had the Communists not contacted the RLG representative in "no-man's land," but Souvanna had announced that negotiations would be impossible unless the RLG emissary came to Xieng Khouang. In these circumstances, said the Secretary, the US was seriously considering placing the matter before the UN Security Council. A further step might be to move a SEATO composite force to Thailand.

Both the British and French diplomats urged patience in waiting for a cease-fire they believed to be imminent. Both were skeptical of the value of an appeal to the UN Security Council, and both were uneasy about moving a SEATO force to Thailand.

(S) Msgs, SecState Circulars, 1709, 1711, 29, 30 May 61.

30 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported on a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives that had considered the situation in Laos.

All the Council Members except the British and French had supported the US proposal, made at the meeting on 28 April (see item), to invoke the Charter Yellow warning of SEATO Plan 5. The British representative had reported that his government had not instructed him as to its position, while the French representative had expressed opposition to Charter Yellow as "premature" and "dangerous."

The US representative then had expressed the concern with which his government viewed the deteriorating situation in Laos and had described the courses of action being considered at the "highest levels" of his government, including SEATO action under Plan 5, UN action, and the stationing of a SEATO standing force in Thailand (see items 26, 29 April). With regard to the last of these courses of action, the Australian representative had pointed out that movement of forces to Thailand should be part of a Plan 5 deployment and not a separate movement, which could not be completed in time to meet the present needs. Other representatives concurred in the Australian view, and the US representative then agreed to refer their views to Washington with the recommendation that Plan 5 be suitably modified to provide for the stationing in Thailand of forces committed under the plan.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1951 and 1952,  
30 Apr 61.

30 Apr

The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic missions that, in response to the Department's request for British views on four subjects concerning Laos, Lord Hood (acting on instructions from the Lord Privy Seal) had made the following comments:

1. Cease-fire. The British thought that the apparent inability of the RLG forces and the PL to get together for cease-fire talks might well be the result of "confusion of communication." (The British hoped that there would be continued efforts to negotiate on a site for the cease-fire talks.)

2. ICC. The British were disturbed over the fact that the Polish delegation was unwilling to proceed to Laos until a cease-fire had become effective. The British were trying to persuade the Indians to convince the Poles that the ICC should go to Laos before the cease-fire.

3. UN Actions. The British said that their attitude on procedures in the UN would depend on circumstances. If SEATO action was to be taken, and the UN to be notified of the action, the British would want the resolution to be a joint US-UK-French resolution. If additional international intervention under UN sponsorship was envisaged, the British would like to have the resolution sponsored by the USSR, India, and the UK.

4. SEATO. The British confirmed the US opinion that, if other measures failed, SEATO action must be invoked. However, the British would have to obtain cabinet approval for SEATO action, and any movement of SEATO forces from Thailand to Laos would require an additional political decision.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1710, 30 Apr 61.



totalled 365 personnel.  
(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 300615Z  
Apr 61.

totalled 365 personnel.  
(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 300615Z  
Apr 61.

The Secretary of State in response to a strongly worded message from Ambassadors Brown and Harriman modified the authority granted on 29 April (see item) to release bombs to Phoumi. The new instructions stipulated that "bombs should not . . . be used in T-6s or released to Phoumi unless specifically authorized by Ambassador Brown."

Brown, upon learning of the authority granted on 29 April, had directed that no action be taken by CHMAAG under this authority. Brown and Harriman had then cabled the Secretary that the use of bombs would be seized upon by the Communists as an excuse for further military action and delay in agreeing to a cease-fire. Furthermore, doubts would again be raised in the minds of the neutrals and Allies as to the sincerity of the US in seeking a cease-fire.

The Ambassadors asserted that they would support "some really significant action such as stationing SEATO forces in Thailand," thus applying "real pressure" upon the Communists to desist from military action. In their judgement, Brown and Harriman continued, the use of bombs in T-6s would be "provocation without achieving results needed."

CHMAAG, reporting these ambassadorial actions to CINCPAC, depicted himself as "again . . . in the middle," since he had alerted the FAL to imminent strikes before Ambassador Brown had issued the holding order.

(TS) Msgs. CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 109099, 30 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1195, 30 Apr 61.

**THE**

[illegible]

30 Apr,  
1 May

According to a 30 April Pathet Lao radio broadcast monitored by FBIS, Kong Le proposed that cease-fire discussions take place at Ban Namone on 1 May.

On the same day Secretary Rusk suggested to Ambassador Brown that he advise Phoumi to accept. The Ambassador, according to his report to the Secretary, had acted on the suggestion on 1 May. Accompanied by the British Ambassador and CHMAAG, Brown had seen Phoumi and urged him to accept the "Kong Le/Souvanna Phouma" offer for cease-fire negotiations at Ban Namone but to ignore any reference to discussions concerning the government or the composition of the Laotian delegation to the Geneva Conference.

Phoumi had been "most reluctant" to accept the Kong Le offer and had refused to do more than "consider" the recommendations of the US and British Ambassadors that he do so. In addition to expressing his doubts concerning the sincerity of the rebel regime's offer, the Laotian leader had pointed out that Ban Namone was 15 kilometers inside enemy lines and, therefore, could not be considered a neutral spot, normal for truce meetings. Phoumi had said he was considering a counter offer to meet on Route 13 at some midpoint between the opposing lines.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1194, 30 Apr 61;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1983, 1 May 61.

1 May

The National Security Council discussed the situation in Laos and agreed that "no final decisions as to U.S. courses of action with respect to that situation should be taken at this meeting, pending further developments in the cease-fire negotiations." The Council noted that the President would be prepared "under certain conditions" to deploy US forces to Thailand. Finally, the Council agreed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should prepare, for presentation to the Council the next day, an appreciation of the military implications of "various" measures that might be taken in Laos, Thailand, and other countries of Southeast Asia.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2417, 1 May 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

1 May

The ICC Laos submitted its first report to the Geneva co-Chairmen. After expressing sentiments of concern and hope, the ICC stated its intention to proceed to Laos as soon as the date for an agreed cease-fire had been arranged, in order to be present at about the time the actual cessation of hostilities took place. Upon arrival in Laos, the Commission stated, its "primary and most important responsibility" would be "to establish close and cooperative relations with the parties, particularly with such joint committees as may be set up for effective implementation of the cease-fire." The ICC expressed its willingness to proceed immediately to any place where such committees might be functioning, and its readiness to consider, in cooperation with the parties to the cease-fire, such measures as the establishment of inspection teams. For this latter purpose, the ICC needed to be authorized to request and receive relevant military information.

The Commission envisioned as its task subsequent to the cease-fire agreement the supervision and control of that agreement.

The ICC requested instructions from the co-Chairmen authorizing the above actions (see item 6 May).

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2543, 1 May 61.

1 May

CINCPAC provided to the JCS plans for the deployment of US forces to Thailand and South Viet Nam (see item 29 April). CINCPAC's plan set up two separate 5,000-man forces, to be deployed to their respective locations separately and by separate orders. The units involved and the timetables for their deployment were as follows:

A. Thailand

1. Forces

- USMC headquarters
- 2 USMC BLTs
- 1 USMC Air Group (-)
- 1 USA Battle Group
- 1 USAF F-100 squadron (plus 6 RF-101s)
- USA 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements

2. Deployment

a. Commencing D-Day - airlift of USMC headquarters and one USMC BLT to Udorn, and USAF elements to Takhli.

b. Commencing D+1 - airlift of 1 USMC BLT to Udorn and air and sealift of 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements to Khorat.

c. Commencing D+2 - airlift of US Army Battle Group to Udorn.

d. Commencing D+5 - airlift of USMC Air Group (-) to Udorn.

B. South Viet Nam

1. Forces

- Headquarters and Headquarters Element of Marine Expeditionary Brigade
- 3 USMC BLTs
- 1 USMC Air Group (-)
- USMC Support Elements as directed

2. Deployment

a. Commencing D-Day - air and/or sea lift of headquarters and three BLTs to Tourane.

b. Commencing D+5 - air and/or sea lift of Marine Air Group (-).

c. USMC supporting elements as directed.

In addition to the foregoing, two attack carrier task groups would take station off South Viet Nam, prepared for supporting operations as directed by CINCPAC. Later a USA Brigade Task Force, less 1 battle group, would deploy from Hawaii to Udorn, at which time the USMC ground and air units at Udorn would be relieved for further deployment.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 109146, 1 May 61.

1-2 May Subsequent to the 1 May NSC meeting (see item), the JCS met, with the Secretary of Defense present. The CNO outlined a requirement imposed on the JCS for an appreciation of the military implications of possible military actions in Southeast Asia, and the Director, Joint Staff, was assigned the project of preparing such a paper. At the same meeting, the Secretary of Defense tabled a draft outline memorandum for the President on US actions regarding Laos.

On 2 May, the JCS met twice with the Secretary of Defense and the Service Secretaries in preparation for the afternoon's NSC meeting. At the morning session, there was extended discussion of the draft memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense; the discussion ended with the Secretary of Defense requesting the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries to submit any differing views after lunch.

At the afternoon meeting, the Secretary of Defense presented a "clean draft" of his proposed memorandum for the President, incorporating changes agreed to during the morning session. Next, the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries tabled memoranda embodying their respective views. Finally, the Joint Staff presented its appreciation of the military situation in Southeast Asia (begun on the previous day; see above); and the conferees agreed to several amendments to it.

The Secretary of Defense then decided that he would gather all these papers into a "package" for presentation at the NSC meeting. The package, when constituted, contained the following:

1. The memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense.
2. A message from the CJCS, at Saigon, on the subject of Laos and Southeast Asia.
3. Memoranda containing the individual views of:
  - a. The Secretary of the Army
  - b. The Chief of Staff, Army
  - c. The Chief of Naval Operations
  - d. The Secretary of the Air Force
  - e. The Chief of Staff, Air Force
4. Portions of the Joint Staff "Appreciation of the Military Situation in Southeast Asia."

(See following item.)

(C) Notes to Control, 1 May and 2 May 61; OCJCS Files, 091 Laos (3).

2 May The National Security Council took the following actions:

1. Noted and discussed a briefing by the Acting Chairman, JCS, on the military implications of "possible" courses of action in Laos.

2. Noted the President's directive that contingency military planning for Southeast Asia should be continued in the light of the rapidly developing situation, and should be discussed with the United Kingdom.

3. Noted that the Secretaries of State and Defense would send to the President "promptly" a joint recommendation on US action regarding Laos (see item 9 May).

(TS) NSC Action No. 2418, 2 May 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

2 May In a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador to Laos summarized Ambassador Harriman's meeting with Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi Nosavan at Luang Prabang on 30 April. Phoumi had requested a promise that 1) the US would not allow key strategic points to be taken, and 2) if these centers should fall to the opposition, the US would provide every assistance in order to retrieve the situation.

Ambassador Harriman, after complimenting the RLG for offering to meet opposition representatives to discuss the cease-fire, had recommended that 1) the cease-fire talks begin immediately, and; 2) that such talks be limited to military arrangements to stop the fighting, without any discussion on political questions. Harriman had concluded his presentation by: 1) stressing the US view of the "error" of trying to compromise with Souvanna Phouma on the future of Laos 2) expressing the hope that the morale of government forces would be maintained at a high level, and that the FAL would resist aggression to the maximum possible extent.

In a separate message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reported that, during a meeting with King Savang Vathana later in the day, Ambassador Harriman had urged that the King not "compromise" the status of the present RLG before the conference had convened. The King had agreed to retain the present RLG in order not to weaken the position of the West.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2009, 2 May 61;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1998, 2 May 61.

2 May The JCS informed CINCPAC that SEATO Plan 5 was under discussion in Washington, within the US Government and with the UK.

The JCS reported that the British considered implicit in Plan 5 the "automatic extension" of military operations to Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang and the Plaine des Jarres. It was the view of the JCS that this attitude was endangering the British contribution of their force commitments to SEATO Plan 5.

Within the US Government, the JCS continued, concern had been expressed "at high levels" that SEATO Plan 5 envisaged the securing of too many places. The JCS had been advised that only Vientiane, Seno, and possibly Pakse should be secured by the SEATO forces. They requested CINCPAC's confirmation or comments on the JCS view that implementation of the plan would conform to this advice, as well as his comment whether or not SEATO Plan 5 required updating in view of the current situation (see item 3 May).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995267, 2 May 61.

2 May Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, following a conference of FAL general officers and a meeting of Laotian Cabinet members, the RLG had issued a press statement on cease-fire negotiations. After reviewing RLG efforts to effect a cease-fire (see item 25, 28, 29 April), the release stated that the officer representing the royal army had been unable to meet the Pathet Lao representative, on 1 May, since Ban Namone was in enemy territory. However, contact with enemy forces had been made near Vang Khi on 1 May. According to the statement, a temporary cease-fire was now in effect in the Vang Khi-Vang Vieng area.

In a separate message to Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Brown reported that, according to the British Ambassador, RLG Foreign Minister Sopsaisana had said the FAL representative had specifically told the PL officer with whom he had made contact that he was to arrange for talks to work out a nation-wide cease-fire. Furthermore, Sopsaisana had said that the FAL officer had been authorized to make arrangements for a future meeting to discuss political problems.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2007, 2 May 61;

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2008, 2 May 61.

2 May Counselor Mendenhall reported from Saigon to the Secretary of State the main points of conversations of the previous day between President Diem, General Lemnitzer, Ambassadors Harriman and Durbrow, and General McGarr (CHMAAG South Viet Nam).

Diem had stated that since the start of the Soviet airlift, the US had been following the UK lead, seeking a cease-fire while the Soviets were building up supplies in both Laos and North Viet Nam. Moreover, the supplies being built-up in the Plaine des Jarres were, according to Diem, not only for use in Laos but for operations against South Viet Nam.

An "all out effort" must be made immediately, Diem continued, to hold at least the Mekong Valley cities, and Saravane, Attapeu, and Tchepone (towns in southern and eastern Laos near the South Vietnamese border).

Diem reported that one of his diplomats had, in conversation with a UK diplomat, opined that the troops required to assure the independence of Laos, estimated by the UK diplomat to be 400,000, could be obtained from Taiwan. Diem indicated to the Americans his agreement with this view. General Lemnitzer commented in reply that the introduction of Chinese Nationalists into Laos would raise more problems than it solved; he suggested that actions should, rather, be taken by SEATO. "Diem laughed," reported Mendenhall. The Vietnamese President stated that the Thais were "'fed up'" with SEATO and were now consulting on international affairs with Viet Nam for the first time since Diem had taken office.

(Mendenhall reported, parenthetically, that on 1 May, when Durbrow had asked Diem if South Vietnamese and Thai troops might be sent into Laos, Diem had replied that there was no legal basis for the entrance of South Vietnamese troops, but that Thai and US troops should enter under the legal basis provided by SEATO.)

Finally, regarding the 14-Nation Conference, Diem had asked: What would the Conference decide? Would it only confirm Communist advances? If there was to be a cease-fire, the free world must insist, Diem had urged, that the Communists return to the positions held at the time of the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire (see item 24 April).

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1659, 3 May 61.

2-3  
May

CINCPAC requested that the JCS remove, on a one-time basis, the restriction that carrier-based reconnaissance flights over Laos avoid the Laos-North Viet Nam border (see item 6-7 April). CINCPAC wished to obtain photographic coverage of the ground access routes from North Viet Nam into Laos; he considered these routes to be of strategic importance, both to the current situation in Laos and to the assessment of the continuing threat to the whole of Southeast Asia. The imminence of a cease-fire made this requirement more urgent, since the cease-fire agreement might restrict overflights of Laos, thus denying this information to the US for an indefinite time.

On the following day, the JCS granted CINCPAC permission for a carrier-based reconnaissance mission stipulating that the mission must be completed before the cease-fire was "effective and so declared" by the ICC. CINCPAC quickly ordered CINCPACFLT to initiate such a mission as soon as possible.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 020335Z May 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995287, 3 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 032047Z May 61.

3 May

In response to a request from the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown provided his estimate of the Laotian situation.

Militarily, Brown began, the FAL was "fast approaching ineffectiveness" and only SEATO or US troops could stop the Pathet Lao if it chose to attack the Laotian population centers. However, "hard evidence" of the imminence of such an attack was lacking, and there seemed a fair chance that a cease-fire would soon take place.



Given the bleak military outlook, Brown continued, the political situation was surprisingly stable. But dissatisfaction with the RLG was increasing in the armed forces and in the politically minded quarters of Vientiane. Although this sentiment was inchoate and unorganized, Brown concluded, there was some risk that the RLG might be deserted by the Laotians.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1202, 1 May 61;  
Vientiane to SecState, 2011, 3 May 61.

3 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Vientiane informed the Secretary of State that the Pathet Lao radio had broadcast at 0630, 3 May, a statement by Kong Le in which he ordered his forces to cease firing as of 0800 on the same day. Kong Le had also requested that both the NLHX forces and the "Phoumi-Boun Oum party" cease firing and immediately end all military movements. These two factions were urged to send fully authorized representatives to Ban Namone, 11 kilometers south of Vang Vieng in order to discuss: a) formation of a coalition government, b) selection of Laotian representatives to attend the conference in Geneva on 12 May, and c) ways and means to solve the "Laotian question and return Laos to its former state."

The Secretary of State, in receipt through other channels of the Kong Le statement, recommended to Ambassador Brown that he advise the RLG to cooperate without raising complicating issues on "picayune details." Phoumi had already accepted, however, as Brown reported a few minutes later. In an official declaration Phoumi stated that the RLG had welcomed the proposal and had given orders to the FAL Commander in Chief to "stop all hostilities and all fighting on all fronts as of this date."

In a cable to Ambassador Brown several hours later, Secretary Rusk noted that the Pathet Lao radio had later broadcast a message from Souvanna Phouma suggesting that the meeting called for by Kong Le take place on 5 May. The purpose given by Souvanna for the meeting was, however, to "negotiate a coalition government to attend . . . [the] Geneva Conference. It appeared, the Secretary said, that Souvanna might be attempting to relate political questions to the cease-fire. RLG acceptance of Souvanna's invitation would seem to place the US at a "maximum disadvantage" at the Geneva Conference, Rusk declared. Therefore, Phoumi ought to be supported if he refused Souvanna's invitation to discuss far-reaching political questions under the present conditions. It would be more profitable, Rusk continued, that the cease-fire first be established and the ICC introduced into Laos before any political discussions took place.

On the following day, Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi, speaking for the RLG in a radio broadcast statement, had declared that a commission headed by General Sing Rathanasamy would meet with representatives of the other forces on 5 May at a point located 2 kilometers north of Hin Heup. (Souvanna's proposal had, according to Phoumi, named Hin Heup as an alternative to Ban Namone.)

Ambassador Brown further reported that Phoumi had told him that the delegation had full powers to discuss the cease-fire, but had no authority to "talk politics."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1207, 1208, 3 May 61  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2021, 4 May 61; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2012, 2014, 3 May 61; (U) NYT, 4 May 61, p. 1; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2020, 4 May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC, replying to the JCS queries concerning SEATO Plan 5 (see item 2 May), stated his view that, under current conditions, the forces entering Laos under the Plan should have as initial objectives the securing of the Vientiane and Seno/Savannakhet areas and adjacent Mekong River crossings. All SEATO military advisers had agreed in these objectives. However, CINCPAC continued, the central objectives of the plan should also include Thakhek, Paksane and other key locations on the Lao-Thai border, in order to maintain the lines of communication from Savannakhet to Vientiane and to assure the Thais that the US did not intend to permit Communist forces becoming a "direct threat" to Thailand. Beyond these border areas, action would not be initiated to seize and hold additional areas "unless so directed."

CINCPAC considered that all forces specified in SEATO Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April), were required to carry out the above objectives and that no updating of the Plan was required. By way of rebuttal of the British fears (see item 2 May), CINCPAC noted that Plan 5 contained, in his opinion, adequate provisions, through the chain of command from the SEATO Council, to preclude SEATO forces' undertaking any subsequent actions that were unacceptable either politically or militarily.

Finally, CINCPAC cautioned that SEATO Plan 5 had not been conceived of as an operation to seize and hold beachheads against an organized opposition, but rather had been predicated upon having an organized FAL that the SEATO forces could support in a counter-insurgency campaign. This assumption obtained at the present time; if, however, the FAL became incapable of conducting organized operations, SEATO Plan 5 would no longer be an appropriate plan for intervention in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 031110Z May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC reported to the JCS that a review of the "newest weapons and equipment" had been conducted, as requested by the Chairman, JCS. The conclusion had been drawn that none of these new items were suitable for "profitable use" by the FAL because the Laotians did not have the capability to employ more sophisticated weapons than those already provided to them. Furthermore, CINCPAC continued, if the situation developed so that the FAL training program could be continued, the ingredients of the program should be "basic training of the soldier" and "motivation and leadership of the officer." Without these fundamentals, concluded CINCPAC, weapons and equipment would be useless.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 032301Z May 61; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108466, 28 Apr 61.

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4 May

Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano informed the US Ambassador at Manila that the Philippine Government was "greatly concerned that there was no present indication of US decisive action in Laos situation." Serrano had the personal impression, Ambassador Hickerson reported to the Secretary of State, that the US was seeking a way to allow Laos to "slip" to the Communists without "too great damage."

Hickerson reported that Serrano had not been impressed by the Ambassador's disavowal of such a US intention. The Ambassador urged to the Secretary that Serrano be kept more fully informed of US policies, in order that his skepticism be abated.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1273, 4 May 61.

4 May

The Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported that, within the SEATO Council of Representatives, discussions and agreements on the political actions in support of SEATO Plan 5 (see items 13 and 28 April) had proceeded as follows:

1. Regarding Action 5, appointment of a political adviser (POLAD) to the SEATO force, the French believed it necessary that specific terms of reference be drafted for the POLAD. The other representatives argued that the general terms of reference contained in Plan 5 for the SEATO Force Commander would suffice. Discussion was suspended pending arrival of expected instructions for the Australian representative from his government.

2. The French representative agreed, subject to confirmation from Paris, to the proposal that situation assessments and warnings would be issued by the Council of Representatives upon receipt, in each case, of instructions from the respective member governments. Also agreed to by the Council was the proposition that if the Charter Green warning were issued, the respective nations would have the responsibility of calling up their force contributions (Action 6 - see items 13 and 28 April).

3. The French Government was "agreeable" to formal status of forces agreements (Action 8), but insisted that no contact should be made with the RLG regarding these agreements until Plan 5 had been activated. The Thais proposed that, in the event formal agreements were not authorized, there should at least be prepared a list of provisions for the guidance of the Force Commanders in negotiating with the RTG and RLG. All agreed to refer the Thai proposal to their governments for instructions (see item 22 May).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1971, 4 May 61.

5 May

Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State that a US Embassy Officer had informed the SEATO Council Representatives of Thailand, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Pakistan that the US was prepared to accede to a UK proposal to postpone further discussion of Charter Yellow. The US spokesman had emphasized that the US was not abandoning the Charter Yellow proposal, and the various Representatives, with the exception of the Australian Representative, had appeared to accept the US position "with equanimity."

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The Australian delegate, while admitting that the UK proposal was "not too unreasonable" at the present juncture, stated frankly that the US should previously have exerted greater efforts to bring France and the UK into line with the US position that Charter Yellow was urgently required. The Australian blamed the US equally with the UK for the present status of SEATO: "'a dead horse.'" The Australians and the Asian members of SEATO had looked to the US for strong leadership, he continued. Australia, for one, had made it unmistakably clear that she would follow the US lead and that she expected the US to use a "strong hand" in impressing upon France and the UK the gravity of the situation in Laos and the necessity for action. But the US had failed to exercise its leadership. The British could have been persuaded to give in, the Australian declared. The French would then have been isolated and required either to prove themselves "worthy members of SEATO" or to admit to "self-centered obstructionism." Even if the latter alternative had resulted, the resulting situation would have been better, in the eyes of the Australian, than the present impasse, which had demonstrated to the Asian members that the SEATO Council resolution (see item 29 March) was "empty words."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1984, 5 May 61.

5 May

Counselor Unger cabled from Bangkok the substance of a conversation between Prime Minister Sarit and Ambassador Harriman. The two statesmen had agreed that, because of the likelihood of a cease-fire, the time for SEATO action had passed. However, Ambassador Harriman had emphasized that both countries must continue quietly and unilaterally to take required alert measures, regardless of British and French opposition to a SEATO declaration of Charter Yellow. Deploring SEATO's inability to take firm action in recent weeks, Harriman also had agreed with the Prime Minister that had SEATO "acted promptly" a cease-fire would probably have since resulted, before many fallen Lao positions had been lost. Consequently, the two men considered, the Western position at the Geneva Conference would have been greatly enhanced.

To Ambassador Harriman's inquiry whether Thailand was prepared to attend the Geneva Conference if there were an effective cease-fire, Sarit replied "'if America goes we go too.'" Sarit made it clear that Thailand would press at the Conference for several points it regarded as "essential." First, the Thais were "absolutely opposed" to acknowledging Souvanna or the PL as representing Laos at the Conference. Second, the Pathet Lao must agree to withdraw from their present positions, either to the "arrangements" of the 1954 Geneva Conference (de facto control by the PL of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces) or to the positions occupied before the Kong Le August 1960 coup. (This second alternative was attributed by Counselor Unger to Harriman, who quickly pointed out that he considered it "unrealistic" and that Sarit had in fact proposed it.) If the Communists did not meet these Thai requirements, Sarit continued, Thailand "might well withdraw from the Conference." However, Harriman eventually

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obtained Sarit's agreement that the question of Lao representation might be postponed at the "early stages" of the Conference, and that Pathet Lao withdrawal "away from the Mekong" and north of the 17th parallel would be an acceptable minimum.

On the question of a broadened or coalition government in Laos, Sarit emphasized that this should not be hurried. He did not think the King strong enough to head such a government and implied, according to Unger, that there was no man strong enough in his estimation; though not fully satisfied with Phoumi et al., he would not change them.

Sarit did not think that Boun Oum and Phoumi could exist under a government headed by Souvanna Phouma and including Communists; either a divided Laos or self-exile by Boun Oum and Phoumi would result. Sarit did not, however, rule out Souvanna's participation in government in some position other than prime minister.

Asked by Harriman for a message to President Kennedy, Sarit responded with the thought that all parties should be prepared, in the event the Geneva Conference failed, to take whatever action necessary to avoid losing Laos. Sarit also desired that more credence and weight be attached to the views of the Southeast Asian allies.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1979, 5 May 61;  
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, Circular 1753, [6 May 61].

5 May CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that an FAL cease-fire committee had met with a PL cease-fire "sub-committee." The meeting had been inconclusive because the PL committee had lacked "power to talk terms."

A meeting the next day, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State, ended in disagreement as to the site for future meetings. The PL insisted upon Ban Namone; the RLG on Hin Heup. But though the meeting itself was again inconclusive, the Ambassador saw significance in the fact that the Pathet Lao had been represented by qualified officers for the first time.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110568, 5 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2029, 6 May 61.

6 May CHMAAG, in a Situation Report to CINCPAC, reported that "Pathet Lao guerrilla units accompanied by Chinese Communist political advisers are moving into areas of northern Laos which have been abandoned by FAL forces."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110914, 6 May 61.

6 May The Department of State cabled to US Embassies the draft instructions to the ICC Laos agreed to by the Geneva co-Chairmen, the UK and the USSR (see item 1 May).

According to the draft, the co-Chairmen considered that, at present, the basic task of the ICC was the "fixing" of a cease-fire in Laos in accordance with an understanding to be reached by the belligerent parties, and in exercising supervision and control over that cease-fire. The ICC should arrive in Laos immediately

after the belligerent parties had ceased firing and should proceed to carry out its task.

Regarding functions for the ICC to perform after the completion of this "first stage" of its work, the co-Chairmen stated that the determination of these functions fell within the competence of the Geneva Conference. The co-Chairmen requested that the ICC furnish them with regular reports on its activities, particularly with regard to the manner in which the cease-fire agreement was being observed by the belligerent parties.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1750, 6 May 61.

6 May

The US Military Attache in South Viet Nam reported to the Army Chief of Staff that approximately 150 South Vietnamese troops had entered Laos east of Tchepone. The Attache reported that South Vietnamese Special Forces reconnaissance teams had been in the Tchepone area since 1 May and had observed more than three battalions of Communist troops beleaguering various FAL outposts. The Attache commented that if the Communist troops succeeded in gaining control of the highway from Laos through Tchepone to South Viet Nam before the military positions were frozen by a Laotian truce, the opportunities for guerrilla incursions would endanger two northern provinces of South Viet Nam.

(S) Msg, USARMA Saigon to CSA, 060357Z May 61.

5 May

The JCS, informing CINCPAC that the stationing of US forces in Thailand was under consideration in Washington (see item 1 May), urgently requested his opinions and recommendations on several questions regarding this course of action, as follows:

- a. What kind of U.S. force do we propose to station in Thailand?
- b. Should it be part of a SEATO force?
- c. Should it be conceived and fashioned as a deterrent to guerrilla infiltration from across Mekong rather than just a U.S. "presence?"
- d. Mission or objective of such force?
- e. Composition of such force - type and number of personnel?
- f. Source of personnel?
- g. Time required to form such force?
- h. Time required to position in Thailand?
- i. Should engineers be included in force - type, number, mission?
- j. Should Civic Action teams be included - size and number of teams?

(See following item for CINCPAC's item-by-item response.)  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995542, 6 May 61.

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7 May

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Within hours, CINCPAC responded to the JCS queries regarding the stationing of US forces in Thailand (see preceding item). CINCPAC's replies, keyed to the JCS questions, were as follows:

(a) The US force stationed in Thailand should be the same as the US elements for SEATO Plan 5 as modified (see item 5 April). Alternatively, the 5,000-man force suggested for Thailand by CINCPAC on 1 May (see item) could be deployed.

(b) The US force should be the US element of the SEATO force designated for SEATO Plan 5.

(c) The force should not be conceived of as a patrol force against infiltration; the Thais had both the responsibility and the capability for patrolling against infiltrations. The US forces designated for SEATO Plan 5 were capable of supporting the Thais in defensive action but were capable of limited offensive action.

(d) The mission of the US force should be to contribute to a visible SEATO effort to stabilize the defenses of Southeast Asia against Communist encroachment and to demonstrate the US intent to honor its commitments to the countries of that area.

(e) The composition of US forces should be that indicated in SEATO Field Forces Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April).

(f) The sources of personnel would be the PACOM components, augmented from CONUS, as indicated by SEATO Field Forces Plan 5.

(g) The US elements of Plan 5 were already formed and prepositioned in forward areas.

(h) The timing of deployments to Thailand should be substantially that indicated for the positioning of the 5,000-man force suggested on 1 May (see item).

(i) The US elements of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 contained sufficient engineer units for initial requirements.

(j) Civic Action teams would not be required; the US element of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 included civil affairs personnel.

CINCPAC strongly recommended that any decision to station US forces in Thailand be "generally in consonance" with the concept of operations for the PACOM elements of SEATO Plan 5. He warned, finally, that if the US force were intended only to bolster Thai strength rather than to enter Laos, Sarit might not favor this course of action.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070008Z May 61.



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7 May

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that a "maximum effort has been made to obtain hard evidence of Viet Minh presence in Laos." A considerable amount of information had been accumulated, CHMAAG continued, but "very little that would stand up as firm evidence in any international conference." CHMAAG listed several specific Viet Minh units that had reportedly been identified by the RLG, but stated that this information had not been confirmed by other sources. The general consensus of reliable observers, reported CHMAAG, was similar to the recently expressed views of the Chief of the RLG External Documentation Service, who had said:

I cannot see entire Viet Minh units engaged in combat in Laos, up to now. Their tactics would be different from those we have seen employed by the enemy. Regular Viet Minh units could be expected to follow up and exploit their tactical successes rapidly instead of taking a week or longer for regrouping after a key town has been taken by them.

There are, to be sure, Viet Minh technicians, weapons crews, and advisors with Pathet Lao forward elements. I accept that entire Viet Minh units have been employed in enemy rear areas, such as Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang provinces, to bolster Pathet Lao morale and consolidate control in these areas. But from the analysis of all the information available to us, I cannot find proof that regular Viet Minh Army units are being employed to spearhead enemy attacks.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111585,

9 May 61.

8 May

Secretary Rusk (in Oslo for the NATO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting) informed the Department of State that during a meeting between British and French Foreign Office representatives and the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, the following points concerning the Geneva Conference on Laos had been discussed:

1. There was complete agreement among the three diplomats that, unless the ICC Chairman sent some form of assurance that the cease-fire was effective, the Conference should not be opened.

2. It was hoped that Sihanouk would arrive to open the Conference. If not, the British and Soviet Foreign Ministers would draw lots for the opening day chairmanship of the meeting. Thereafter they would alternate daily as chairman instead of the chairmanship's rotating through the 14 nations.

3. It was considered advisable to provide Laos a seat at the conference table. The RLG, as the legitimate government, would claim the right to this seat; if this right was challenged it might be necessary, as a concession, to seat the Laotian delegation as observers, speaking in the conference on invitation. Allowance would also have to be made for seating the delegation of a coalition government if one was formed.

4. The suggestion that King Savang, as sovereign of the country to be under discussion at the international meeting, be invited to express his desires and opinions at the Conference was considered to have some merit. However, all three representatives seriously doubted that the King would accept such an invitation.

5. According to the British delegate, the Soviets had agreed that conference deliberations would be restricted to the subject of Laos. Any effort to broaden the field of discussions would be vigorously resisted by the US, UK, and France.

6. It was agreed that the agenda should be kept as simple as possible. The first item should be consideration of the ICC Chairman's message on the effectiveness of the cease-fire. At that point, it was hoped that the agenda would consist of one item entitled "'International Recognition of Neutrality of Laos and Measures to Achieve it with the Assistance of International Supervisory and Control Machinery.'"

7. On the subject of the Geneva Accords, the British were firm in their opinion that the Accords were so out dated that large portions were inapplicable. The British believed that the best approach, therefore, would be to pay "lip service" to the spirit of the Geneva Accords, while at the same time attempting to perfect agreements to meet new needs under new conditions. The French were probably only partially agreed on this approach, as they were most reluctant to give up special privileges that had been given to them by the Accords.

8. It was agreed that, before any conference machinery could begin the task of assisting Laos to achieve the status of a neutral nation, agreement had to be reached on the essential aspects of neutrality. One predominant consideration would be the question of restrictions on the size and character of a future Laotian military force.

9. There was general agreement on the need to involve neutral countries, such as Cambodia and Burma, in the problem of Laos. The Asian neighbors of Laos would then have the opportunity to assume "heavy responsibility" in guarding their own interests and in bringing about the conditions in Laos that would be acceptable to them.

"Considerable sympathy" had been shown for the idea of establishing a Commission (either separate from or in conjunction with the ICC) that, under authority from the 14-Nation Conference, would carry out its mission in Laos for several months and then report to a reconvened Conference. This concept would have the advantage of: 1) keeping the work of the Conference within manageable bounds; 2) allowing the opportunity for the situation in Laos to evolve in the presence of Commission teams; and 3) providing mechanism for an Asian Commission to work out many of the details more properly in its province than in that of a conference session.

10. Finally, there was agreement that any major violation of the cease-fire by the Communists would create an entirely new situation which would require appropriate action by SEATO powers.

(S) Msg, Oslo to SecState, SECTO 16, 8 May 61.

8 May

The Acting Secretary of State informed diplomatic posts of the Harriman/Galbraith meeting with Prime Minister Nehru on 5 May. Ambassador Harriman had reported that Nehru had agreed with him and Ambassador Galbraith on the following points: 1) India and the US had a common objective in attempting to develop a genuinely neutral Laos; 2) rather than follow the 1954 Geneva Agreement on the ICC procedures for guaranteeing the neutrality of Laos, new and special machinery was needed; 3) the function of the ICC should be "only" to verify the cease-fire. The Commission should not become involved in any political negotiations; and 4) it would be desirable for the US and India to confer prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference.

Ambassador Harriman had also said that, in the Prime Minister's opinion, it would be preferable to have the various political factions in Laos form a coalition regime now, so that a Laotian Government could participate in the Conference, rather than to have delegations from two or three groups attending the Geneva meeting as observers. In addition, the Indian leader was opposed to the introduction of any other subjects for consideration at the Conference (e.g., the problem in South Viet Nam).

Nehru had also expressed the opinion that the Pathet Lao would undoubtedly try to use its military advances to enforce the movement's demands for a larger political participation in the government. Nevertheless, the Indian Premier believed that the US should not permit these PL territorial gains to "force" a division of Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to New Delhi et al., 3172, 8 May 61.

8 May

Another cease-fire meeting was held at Hin Heup (see item 5 May) and again the results were inconclusive, because of disagreement concerning a formal meeting place for negotiations. The RLG representatives had agreed to come to Ban Namone for military discussions if the PL would come to Hin Heup for "political discussions." The PL had insisted that all discussions be held at Ban Namone; the FAL had refused this proposal because Ban Namone was located behind the PL lines.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111561, 9 May 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2042, 9 May 61.

8 May

The first elements of the ICC arrived in Vientiane, according to Ambassador Brown. The respective delegation chairmen were: India, Mr. Samarendranath Sen; Canada, Mr. Leon Meyrand; Poland, Mr. Albert Morski.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2039, 8 May 61;  
(U) NYT, 9 May 61, 1, 4.

8 May

Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that, since the US acceptance of a political solution through the ICC and the 14-Nation Conference (see item 23 March), the US had suffered a loss of prestige and that the confidence of the Asian and Pacific allies in US leadership had waned.

Although many of these allies had doubted that a stable, united, non-Communist, neutral Laos could be achieved through a 14-Nation Conference, they had acquiesced in the new US position, which they understood to be premised upon an early cease-fire and the avoidance of the loss of additional territory to the PL. It was with this understanding, together with the US assurances that SEATO would act if a Communist take-over threatened Laos, that the allies had agreed to the mild SEATO resolution of 29 March (see item).

Since the SEATO Council meeting, the Communists had sought to immobilize the US by holding forth the prospect of a cease-fire while they advanced their military position in Laos. Twice some SEATO response appeared to be gaining the general acceptance of the SEATO members and twice the UK had dissuaded the US from SEATO action. In all this, Unger continued, the role of the British was not appreciated by the Asian allies, who feared that the US was betraying a "dangerous inability" to frustrate an "obvious Communist game."

Perhaps the most serious damage done by the events of the past six weeks, stated Unger, had been the raising of doubts in the minds of the allies concerning the reliability of US assurances of support "when their turn comes."

On 10 May, commenting upon Unger's analysis, Ambassador Brown cabled from Vientiane his view that the US could not afford for one instant to relax its vigilance during a cease-fire. Brown believed that the PL-Viet Minh forces could from their present positions overrun Laos in a matter of days if the FAL were the only opposition. While the US training and resupply of the FAL would continue at top speed, the FAL could not in the "time available" be given the capability to withstand the Communist attack. Therefore, Brown concluded, planning should begin now for the rapid intervention of outside forces at the "first firm sign" that the enemy intended to mount an attack. This planning should be within the SEATO framework if possible. If that should seem as unproductive as in the past, the alternative should be on as wide a multilateral basis as was obtainable.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1994, 8 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2049, 10 May 61.

8 May

CHMAAG cabled to CINCPAC his comments, proposals and recommendations on US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period. The various points included in the cable, some "general in nature" according to CHMAAG, because of the absence of terms of reference for the operation of the ICC, were the following:

1. A proposal to increase the training in Thailand for the FAL.

2. A proposal to refit and retrain those FAL units remaining in Laos, including: a) inspection and rehabilitation of equipment; (b) training on the site and at schools of officers, NCO's, and specialists; (c) acceleration of English language training in order to prepare more Laotians for training in the US; (d) encouraging of the FAL to intensify its troop information, troop indoctrination, and psychological warfare programs; and (e) organization of technical service contact teams to visit FAL units to assist with the rehabilitation of equipment.

3. The comment that, although the ICC might object to the movement of units or equipment and to the presence of MAAG personnel, the initial ICC concern would be to assure the fact of a cease-fire. The US should, therefore, CHMAAG continued, take every possible step "during this period" to improve the posture of the FAL.

4. A proposal to continue the "essential" US resupply of all FAL units, including air drops to otherwise inaccessible units. It might be necessary, CHMAAG said, that the FAL inform the ICC of this resupply "in certain cases."

5. Anticipating requests from the ICC for assistance in transportation and communications, the statement that CHMAAG could render "limited support," and the request of CINCPAC for guidance concerning US reaction to such requests.

6. CHMAAG's intention to retain and redeploy Thai volunteer personnel as previously planned (see item 29 April).

7. The expectation that the PL would attempt during the cease-fire period to infiltrate and subvert where possible, and the consequent necessity that the FAL be prepared and supported in countervailing these tactics.

8. The proposal that, in view of the overriding necessity to improve the FAL logistics capability, there be approved increases in: (a) technical service advisers assigned to the MAAG, (b) logistic training within the FAL; and (c) the quotas for Laotians to US technical service schools.

(On 9 May, Ambassador Brown commended CHMAAG's message to the Department of State's attention, stating his full support for CHMAAG's proposals.)

(For CINCPAC's comments, see item 10 May; for State's comments, see item 12 May.)

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111398, 9 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2041, 9 May 61.

8 May CINCPAC stated to the JCS that he "sensed a lack of complete understanding at high places on [sic] Washington" of the concept of SEATO Plan 5, the interrelationship of that plan and the FAL, and the capabilities of the FAL to do their part in Plan 5. "Thus," CINCPAC continued, "the decision makers may have been led to feel that Laos is lost and that, therefore, their attention should be focused on other somewhat less critical problems." CINCPAC offered rebuttal to these misconceptions as follows:

1. Implementation of SEATO Plan 5 did not mean that US troops must retake Laos. If action were taken "while there is still time" SEATO forces would merely occupy key urban centers without having to "fight their way in," and FAL forces would be freed to fight in the remote areas of Laos.

2. The recent major reverses suffered by the FAL had, CINCPAC felt, led the "decision makers" to conclude that the FAL could not and would not fight. There were "many facets to the recent record of the green and half trained FAL," CINCPAC said, "but they will fight if the circumstances give them any hope of success." Although the FAL had been "taking a licking in the broad sense," because of superior enemy fire power and competent Viet Minh assistance, the FAL had not disintegrated. There still remained "an army and other means to revive the counter-guerrilla campaign" that had been progressing prior to the Kong Le coup and the subsequent Communist intervention.

The US now had its "last opportunity," CINCPAC argued, to save Vientiane, keep the King on his throne, and prevent Communist occupation of important positions on the Mekong River. "Explicitly, this means implement SEATO Plan 5, or any politically necessary variant," CINCPAC asserted. If the key cities of Laos were secured, CINCPAC concluded, the FAL would "stiffen" and the RLG would be in an immeasurably better position to "carry the day" for the minimum US objectives in Laos, which were, according to CINCPAC, "in serious jeopardy."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080113Z May 61.

8 May CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that, in view of the arrival of the ICC team in Vientiane, he had directed that all reconnaissance missions be "stood down." CHMAAG recommended to CINCPAC, however, that US reconnaissance aircraft remain available awaiting future developments on the Laotian scene.

On the same day, CINCPAC ordered CINCPACFLT to discontinue carrier-based reconnaissance missions (see item 2-3 May).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111117, 8 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 080722Z May 61.

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9 May

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The Acting Secretary of State informed Secretary Rusk (at Oslo for the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting) that the President had approved the following instructions for the Geneva Conference on Laos.

1. The Secretary of State was to proceed to the Geneva Conference as the head of the US Delegation on the assumption that a cease-fire, verified by the ICC or "other conditions satisfactory" to the US, would prevail by 12 May. In the absence of such conditions, the Secretary was authorized at his discretion to stay away from the opening session, or to attend and request a suspension pending clarification of the situation in Laos.

2. The US would continue to support the present government of Laos and would press for its representation at the Conference. If this proved to be impossible, the US would accept an arrangement whereby representatives of the present government, the Souvanna group, and, if necessary, the PL would participate as observers at the international gathering. If a coalition government with a dangerously large or influential Pathet Lao component should seek admission as the RLG, the US delegation would request new instructions.

3. As an opening position, the US should propose a constructive package that would assure a neutral, independent, peaceful, sovereign, and socially and economically viable Laos. The program would include the following three points:

a. A neutral, politically independent Laos with a firm international guarantee against external aggression.

b. The establishment of Laos as a "peace sanctuary" with internal forces reduced to the level necessary to maintain its national security. This condition would be supervised and maintained by a Peace Preservation Commission of neutrals, preferably under UN auspices. The Commission's goals would be first, to insure the phased withdrawal of foreign military personnel and prevent the entry of new military personnel or equipment except the minimum required to train and equip an internal constabulary and, second, to prevent infiltration and subversion within Laos.

c. The US would invite the USSR and other interested missions to join it in underwriting the cost of an extensive technical and economic aid program for a neutral and independent Laos. The program would be administered by a commission of neutral nations from the area.

4. Since the Soviets would probably reject these proposals, the US Delegation should consider the following contingencies:

a. Continue to present US proposals at infrequent sessions for several months, providing an acceptable cease-fire was maintained;



b. Seek to suspend the Conference on the basis of a de facto cease-fire while the principal political factions in Laos turned to the formation of a coalition government,

c. Seek to negotiate a compromise based on a federated or partitioned Laos;

d. Take the matter to the UN either before or after the Conference had adjourned; or

e. Leave the Conference on a clear issue of principle, or seek to have it brought to an end.

These alternative courses of action were not mutually exclusive, but a combination of them would depend upon circumstances. The US position "on the ground in Laos is weak. We cannot enforce what we would like," the instructions stated. Furthermore, the Communists would insist on getting a Communist-dominated coalition government. Therefore, it was recommended that "we keep under constant advisement what military and political actions we should take in Laos, Thailand, and Free Viet-Nam to strengthen our hand or anticipate a break-up of the Conference."

5. The recommendation was also made that "we be prepared to have the Conference fail and be adjourned if we cannot reach some satisfactory agreement."

With that possibility in mind, considerations should be given to plans by which, if necessary, "the political and military position of the present government may be consolidated in southern Laos." (See item 12-13 May for contingency plans.) The Communists might possibly accept such a de facto division.

However, if the Communist forces, following the break-up of the Conference, should renew their offensive, the US would be faced with the ultimate decision: "whether or not to introduce US forces into this area through SEATO or with those SEATO members prepared to participate. Our military plans and preparations should be kept in a high state of readiness against this eventuality. To support this eventuality the MAAG in Laos should utilize the existing period of cease-fire to intensify its training and reorganization of the FAL."

6. Early in the Conference the US would be confronted with the "crucial question" of who would head up a new Lao government and what would be the composition of a coalition government.

The US should, in the first instance, have as its objective a government composed of all principal political elements within Laos, except those on the extreme right and the extreme left. Souvanna Phouma would participate as a member of the new government, but not as Prime Minister. If this plan did not prove feasible, the US might be confronted with the acceptance of a government headed by Souvanna and including at

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least two Pathet Lao ministers. After appropriate consultations had been held by the US Delegates in the early stages of the Conference, the Delegation would be in a better position to make recommendations on this crucial point and to ask for instructions.

(S) Msg, SecState to Oslo, TOSEC 34, 9 May 61.

9 May

The JCS commented by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on the draft State-Defense joint plan for possible SEATO intervention in Laos.

This plan, completed on 4 May, was an outgrowth of the NSC meeting of 2 May (see item). The plan considered first the circumstances under which SEATO intervention would take place. Clear failure to reach a cease-fire, or the breaking of a cease-fire by the Communists, accompanied by a resumption of offensive action, would be the precipitating cause. UN action to control the situation would be sought, based on a Lao appeal. At this time the SEATO nations could 1) wait for effective UN action without doing anything unless such UN action were forestalled; 2) take visible preparatory SEATO steps while waiting, to speed UN action; or 3) proceed with necessary intervention measures simultaneously with initiation of the appeal for UN action. A plan of action "should" be presented to the US Congress before, or at least simultaneously with, the initial UN steps.

The political objective prompting intervention would be made clear: to hold intact the existing military situation in Laos pending an effective cease-fire and the establishment of satisfactory controls. Assurance would be given that no action to "reconquer Laos" would be taken and that any military action that occurred would be defensive; though defensive, however, it would be adequate to fulfill the political objective.

Combat forces in Laos would number approximately 13,200 on a SEATO-wide basis; without the Commonwealth Brigade, they would number about 12,000. Pakistani forces of about 2,000 men would arrive as soon as airlift could be provided.

Initially, the SEATO forces would occupy key points along the Mekong River still in RLG hands, including Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno, and Savannakhet. The defense of Luang Prabang would initially be left to FAL forces. The general guideline for reaction by intervening forces to increased hostile action by the enemy would be a response "adequate to fulfill the mission and to inflict punishment on the attacker." If the Pathet Lao forces (without major additional Viet Minh reinforcements) continued a broad offensive not limited to the areas occupied by SEATO forces, they and their supply lines should be subjected to air attacks, but no such attacks should be made closer than 10 miles from the North Vietnamese or Communist Chinese borders except for Nong Ket, a well-marked supply center five miles from the border.

State and Defense were divided on what should be done if major additional Viet Minh forces moved into Laos. State's alternative would require the SEATO

forces to take no counteraction initially, whereas the Defense alternative would immediately authorize air attacks confined to Laos. If the Viet Minh attacked, under the State alternative the SEATO forces were to seek political authorization for immediate action against North Viet Nam. Under the Defense alternative such political authorization was to be sought if Viet Minh attack seemed imminent.

If the Chinese Communists intervened, political authorization would be sought for prompt counteraction.

The draft plan estimated Pathet Lao capabilities would not extend beyond harassing, guerrilla-type operations, probably directed by DRV (North Vietnamese) cadres and with DRV technical and logistical support and Communist-bloc airlift.

North Viet Nam could introduce up to 14 infantry divisions and one artillery division to counter SEATO forces. These DRV forces could be provided tactical air support by the Chinese Communists. About 270 jet fighters were normally located at South China bases, and these and other aircraft, including light jet bombers, could be readily redeployed for operations in Laos.

The Chinese Communists could have about eight divisions in Laos within 30 days from the date of deciding to intervene. These divisions could be supported by jet fighters and light bombers as indicated above.

The draft plan assessed enemy intentions as follows: Open counterintervention by Communist-bloc forces would be in large part dependent upon the manner and circumstances attending the introduction of SEATO forces into Laos. Thus if the declared objective of the SEATO forces were the taking of all Laos up to the borders of Communist China and North Viet Nam, there probably would be a massive Communist-bloc response. But declaration of the limited objective set forth earlier in the State-Defense plan probably would provoke no more than a Communist political and diplomatic campaign to force withdrawal of the SEATO forces. The Communists probably would make such withdrawal a prior condition to the convening of the Geneva Conference.

The draft plan recommended 1) that the President approve the foregoing plan for SEATO military intervention if the existing cease-fire negotiations should break down and the Communist offensive should be renewed, and 2) that the necessary measures for intervention should proceed simultaneously with the initiation of steps in the UN.

In reviewing the foregoing plan, the JCS stated, they had given special attention to the part concerned with the contingency of major additional Viet Minh forces moving into Laos. Any intervention with US forces into Laos either unilaterally or under SEATO auspices should, the JCS considered, be undertaken

"only after firm US governmental decision to the effect that the United States is thereby prepared and committed to succeed in its military intervention regardless of the extent of possible communist escalation." The requirement for such a US governmental decision, the JCS recommended, should be written into the draft as "an unequivocal fundamental to US military action."

(TS) JCSM-313-61 to SecDef, "Proposed Draft on Plan for Possible Intervention in Laos (U)," 9 May 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/985, 9 May 61.

9 May

The Acting Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, discussed the "special relationship" of the US and the Meo tribesmen. Since the beginning of the year, the US had provided the Meo with arms and guidance, urging them to fight the Pathet Lao. The Meo leaders had responded by providing 6,700 tribesmen who had formed auto-defense units and who had fought effectively. As a result, the Meos had deprived themselves of the manpower to plant their food crops and had incurred the enmity of the Communists who would undoubtedly seek to destroy the Meo threat.

The US had, therefore, both a moral obligation and a practical need to preserve the Meos by aiding them materially and politically; however, it was anticipated that supplying those Meos located north of Xieng Khouang would prove increasingly difficult.

In view of the above, the Acting Secretary continued, the following had been decided:

1. The Department of State did not agree to the arming of 900 additional Meo scattered throughout northern Xieng Khouang province. These units would add little to the Meo defensive capability and would, moreover, be particularly vulnerable to Communist countermeasures.

2. Ambassador Brown should attempt to insure that the RLG would defend the proposition that the Meo were part of the FAL, and thus the position that the areas held by the Meo were under RLG authority. Also, the RLG should continue to supply the Meos. [redacted] authorized to make a "special effort" prior to effective ICC inspections to supply food and ammunition, but not arms, to the Meos. This authorization envisaged, according to the Acting Secretary, the caching of ammunition and communications supplies to permit the Meo to defend themselves; offensive action should be carefully avoided while the cease-fire was in effect.

3. Ambassador Brown should urge the RLG to inform the ICC that the Xieng Khouang area was a combat front, to which cease-fire verifications must extend.

4. In the event of signs of "doubt or restiveness" on the part of the Meo leaders, the above resupply should serve as an earnest of US intentions.

5. The US would seek to have the Geneva Conference provide for the protection of Laotian minorities, including the Meo.

6. LTAG teams should remain with the Meos as long as feasible. Since these teams would be training regular auto-defense units, they need not be hidden from the ICC.

7. [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED]

9. Care should be taken to give the "outward appearance" that the Meos were not receiving preferential treatment over other auto-defense units.

(See item 17 May for Ambassador Brown's point-by-point reply.)

0 May

The JCS informed CINCPAC that they had transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, their answer to the Secretary of State's question: "'Does US have present capability, logistic and otherwise, to engage in full-scale non-nuclear campaign in Laos, and possibly North Vietnam and Red China, to include capture Hainan Island?'"

The views of the JCS, which they had requested that the Secretary of Defense furnish as such to the Secretary of State, were as follows:

1. The US had the capability to conduct a full-scale, non-nuclear campaign in Laos and North Viet Nam provided Communist China did not intervene.

2. The US did not have the present capability to conduct full-scale, non-nuclear war with Communist China. Therefore, the JCS were of the firm opinion that military intervention in Laos should be undertaken only after a "firm US governmental decision" had been made that the US was "thereby prepared and committed to succeed in military intervention regardless of [the] extent of possible subsequent communist intervention."

3. The Chinese Communist threat could, however, be destroyed or neutralized by nuclear sorties in numbers well within the present capabilities of PACOM.

4. Full-scale, non-nuclear operations in Southeast Asia would seriously restrict the capabilities of the US simultaneously to conduct similar operations elsewhere, until appropriate mobilization or other emergency measures had been undertaken.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995753, 10 May 61.

0 May

CINCPAC supplied to CHMAAG his comments on CHMAAG's recommendations for US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May).

CINCPAC generally concurred in CHMAAG's comments, with the following qualifications and exceptions:

1. The proposed acceleration of English language training and subsequent increase in Laotian training in the US (comments 2(c), see item 8 May) should not dilute "irreparably" FAL leadership.

2. CINCPAC was awaiting guidance from the JCS concerning the disposition of Thai volunteers during the cease-fire period (comment 6, see item 8 May; see item 29 April).

3. Guidance for CHMAAG on US reaction to ICC requests for assistance (comment 5, see item 8 May) would be furnished by separate message.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 112033, 11 May 61.

10 May CHMAAG evaluated for 13th Air Force Headquarters the RT-33 reconnaissance missions over Laos. CHMAAG recounted the "outstanding results" of the first mission flown, the photographs from which had been immediately utilized to save RLG forces south of Vang Vieng from a "serious defeat." Unfortunately, CHMAAG continued, subsequent RT-33 missions had been restricted to altitudes of 20,000 feet or above. The Laotian jungle, according to CHMAAG, made high altitude reconnaissance "of little or no value."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to 13th AF, DA IN 111739, 10 May 61.

10 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Department of State that Indian Prime Minister Nehru had, at the behest of Secretary Rusk and Lord Home, who were striving to get the Geneva Conference underway on 12 May, requested ICC Chairman Sen to certify the existence of a cease-fire as quickly as possible. According to the British Ambassador to Laos, from whom Brown received this information, Nehru's message had urged Sen to make this certification if it was "at all consistent with [the] facts and his conscience."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2050, 10 May 61.

11 May In response to the message containing instructions for the Geneva Conference (see item 9 May), Secretary Rusk informed the President and the Acting Secretary of State that he wanted to comment on the "all important paragraph five." The effectiveness and strength of the US position in Geneva, Rusk said, would be "critically determined by whether we are prepared, should negotiations break down, to act in Laos by military means, at least in the south, or whether we are in a position of trying to save what can be saved without SEATO action in Laos itself. . . . We hope . . . to reach a satisfactory result by negotiation which would avoid military action, but we must be clear in our own minds at some stage as to whether we must accept an unsatisfactory result because we have no other acceptable choice."

The Secretary reported that he and Lord Home would be having discussions with Gromyko about a Laotian settlement that would reflect Khrushchev's agreement to an "Austrian Laos." The US could make real headway, Rusk said,

if Gromyko believes that we still are as determined as President and I said we were when we saw him in Washington. If he concludes that we have "abandoned Laos" he will chase us around the barn in negotiations. If we are serious, beyond a gesture such as leaving the Conference, I believe there is a real chance that we can find a US-UK-USSR agreement which could reassure our SEATO allies and avoid the atmosphere of defeat in Laos. But we are approaching the final stages where we cannot bluff because the bluff might be called.

At SEATO, CENTO and NATO Rusk continued, "I have been deeply impressed by the extent of the reliance of the Free World upon the attitude of the United States. These nations have great respect for the combination of firmness and peaceful purpose the President has shown. . . ."

On Laos, Rusk believed, the US had a "fair chance" of getting strong neutral support, partly because of the extraordinary patience the US had shown in trying to find a peaceful settlement and partly because of the neutrals' own anxiety about a Communist Laos. But even neutrals, Rusk warned, might abandon their own neutrality if they believed that the US would shrink from confronting Sino-Soviet power when the "chips are down."

The delegation would not negotiate seriously about Laos until a cease-fire had been reasonably frozen. But if such a cease-fire was "blatantly violated" by the other side, Rusk hoped, he said, that the US would be "prepared to support UN and SEATO action by an appropriate military demonstration in Laos." The Secretary believed that such a demonstration could be made without escalation into a general war because the Sino-Soviet bloc would be very reluctant to let Laos get out of control under conditions that would impose upon it the maximum responsibility for pressing a military rather than a peaceful solution. In his opinion, the Soviets were playing "for larger stakes throughout the world," and they would accept continued negotiations on Laos or some sort of UN action before resorting to major escalation.

The President, replying to Secretary Rusk's message, stated that he fully understood the force of Rusk's arguments, and specifically agreed that, if a cease-fire was blatantly violated by the other side, the US must face the prospect of UN and SEATO action and an appropriate military demonstration in Laos. In view of this possibility, said the President, continued close understanding with the British was essential, and he instructed Rusk to hold Lord Home to the standards agreed upon at Key West and Bangkok. The US had been going "the last mile" with the British on the road of negotiation and cease-fire and would continue to do so as long as there was agreement that this road offered hope for a genuinely neutral Laos. But if there should be a serious change on the ground by military action of the other side, the US should have clear British support for appropriate action.



The US should also aim at the "closest possible understanding with the French," the President continued, because a three-power solidarity against Soviet pressure might "be vital in even more important phases this year."

The US must maintain, with British support and French understanding, a "readiness to act." This was "the necessary condition for a productive conference," the President declared, but any action must be taken under conditions which would, in fact, impose the maximum responsibility on the other side.

(TS) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 59, 11 May 61;  
(TS) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 54, 11 May 61.

11 May Secretary of State Rusk informed the Department of State of the results of a meeting between Lord Home and Gromyko as reported to him by Home.

Gromyko had been adamant on two points: 1) that three "'forces'" from Laos be represented at the conference table, the Pathet Lao to have equal status with the others, and 2) whatever Laotian delegations were present when the conference officially opened would represent Laos. Because the RLG representatives had not arrived, the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations would therefore be the only Laotian representatives.

Secretary Rusk stated the opposition of the US to the Soviet "three forces" approach, pointing out that the US had only accepted an invitation to the conference to meet with 13 nations of which Laos was one. The Pathet Lao did not claim to be a government nor was it recognized as such by any power. To seat the Pathet Lao at the conference table would, in Rusk's opinion, grant it status which could influence the negotiations for a new government in Laos in the direction of Communist domination. In view of the fact that some powers at the conference recognized Souvanna as premier, the US was willing to seat his representatives along with those of the RLG as special observers but not as official delegates. Either of these groups should be allowed to request that any other Laotian present in Geneva be granted permission to sit in the galleries of the conference hall and possibly be given permission to speak.

The British and French agreed with this position as logical and defensible. The British were willing to attempt to gain Gromyko's acceptance of it but were fearful that he would refuse, in which case the three Western allies would have to decide whether or not to break up the conference on the seating issue.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 83, 12 May 61.

11 May The ICC submitted its initial report from Laos to the Geneva co-Chairmen. A copy furnished the Department of State by the British Embassy was sent to Secretary Rusk at Geneva.

The ICC reported that it had established friendly contact with all the principal parties in Laos and had ascertained that, since the declaration of cease-fire (see item 3 May), there had been a "general and

demonstrable cessation of hostilities." Although there had been complaints of local violations of the cease-fire, the ICC had not received any formal written complaints. On the contrary, it had been given unequivocal assurances by each side of a determination to maintain the cease-fire except when provoked or in self-defense. The belligerent parties had not yet signed a formal agreement of cease-fire, the ICC reported, but military teams from both sides were in regular contact with each other and an agreement "on questions relating to the cease-fire" would, it was hoped, be reached soon. Any breaches of the cease-fire which had occurred were, according to the ICC, the result either of misunderstanding or of peculiar terrain and troop deployment factors.

(C) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 59, 11 May 61.

12 May The Under Secretary of State advised Ambassador Brown that the Department concurred in CHMAAG's recommendation for US actions during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May). The State Department excepted from this concurrence only CHMAAG's comment that the ICC might have to be notified of US resupply of FAL units, noting that the US had consistently sought to limit the ICC terms of reference to verification of a cease-fire. CHMAAG's request for guidance in aiding the ICC was "being considered" with the Department of Defense.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1247, 12 May 61.

12 May



(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 112578, 12 May 61.

12-13  
May

In a memorandum to the JCS on 12 May, the Chief of Naval Operations recommended that the JCS urgently prepare and co-ordinate with CINCPAC a plan for holding southern Laos, with the RLG unilaterally or with the RLG supported by some or all of the SEATO allies. The plan should stem, the CNO recommended, from existing contingency plans and should cover the incident problems and operations throughout Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and South Viet Nam. The plan should, the CNO concluded, indicate the recommended demarcation line across Laos.

The Chief of Naval Operations based his recommendations upon the instructions for the Geneva Conference that had been cabled to Secretary of State Rusk on 9 May (see item), and upon additional information from Walt Whitman Rostow, Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Mr. Rostow had told the CNO that the President had reaffirmed to the Secretary of State the firmness of US intent to be prepared for the contingencies to which the foregoing plan was to be addressed. Mr. Rostow had also reported the President's

intent to have this fall-back position of a divided Laos discussed with the UK, and perhaps with other SEATO allies, in order to carry as many as possible of the allies along with the US if the contingency should develop (see item 11 May). The President was also concerned, Mr. Rostow had said, that US military contingency planning should proceed accordingly.

On the following day, the JCS, presumably as a consequence of the foregoing memorandum, requested the comments and recommendations of CINCPAC to assist them in preparing a plan such as the Chief of Naval Operations had recommended. The JCS stated to CINCPAC that they considered the following factors pertinent in drawing up the plan: 1) the maximum geographical area and population of Laos consistent with political and military realities should be held; 2) offensive operations to seize a demarcation line in enemy-held territory would probably not be authorized; 3) the FAL alone would be unable to continue to hold its existing positions if fighting was resumed, and if regrouped in some chosen area of southern Laos, the FAL would have to be reorganized and trained before it could stand alone; 4) SEATO forces should initially occupy and secure key areas in southern Laos; 5) SEATO force strength could be reduced (if the plan were put into effect) as reorganization and training increased the capability of the FAL to assume responsibility; and 6) the choice of a line would be essentially a political decision, tempered by military considerations; hence several possible lines should be examined. The JCS described six possible demarcation lines for CINCPAC's consideration and comment.

Finally, the JCS stated their opinion that the concept of SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC's OPlan 32-59 (Phase II, Laos) remained valid as a point of departure for the proposed plan. (For CINCPAC's reply see item 16 May.)

(TS) Msg, JCS 995920 to CINCPAC, 13 May 61; (TS) Memo, CNO to JCS, "Contingency Planning, Laos (C)," 12 May 61, serial 00096P61, reproduced in JCS 1992/987, 12 May 61.

13 May Secretary Rusk reported that, in discussions with the French and British foreign ministers, the following "tentative program" for getting the Conference under way had been agreed to:

1. On 14 May the co-Chairmen would announce that they had decided to seat, as observers, any Laotian group which any Conference member requested to be seated. In an accompanying announcement, the co-Chairmen would declare that these seating arrangements were without prejudice to efforts being made in Laos to form a government, which was an internal Laotian affair.

2. The opening meeting would be on 15 May and would be confined to brief formal statements by the co-Chairmen. Business meetings would begin on the 16th with general statements by all delegations of

their over-all views on Laotian policy. Following these statements, discussion would probably then turn to "detailed consideration of military aspects of the situation and peace-keeping machinery."

3. The US, British, and French Governments agreed to advise Phoumi urgently that this agreement was without prejudice to his negotiations for a new government, and he should continue to stand firm for a satisfactory coalition arrangement.

4. The US delegation agreed to urge the Thai and Vietnamese delegations to be present for the first business meeting.

The Secretary concluded by requesting Department of State comments on the "observer" plan (see item 14 May).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 102, 13 May 61.

13 May

The advance party of the RLG delegation to the Geneva Conference arrived at the Conference site, Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State. In a meeting of this advance group with Rusk, Ngon Sananikone, senior member and spokesman of the party, stated two prerequisites for RLG attendance at the Conference: 1) a valid cease-fire; and 2) recognition of the RLG as the sole legal government of Laos. The Secretary then informed the Laotian group of the strong US insistence that the RLG was the only legitimate Lao government, of the unacceptable Soviet demand for triple representation on the basis of equality, and of the sentiments of "other friendly nations" that debate over the legality of Laotian representatives should not be permitted to frustrate the objectives of the Conference. The Secretary suggested that the group cable its government for the latest RLG position, particularly with regard to possible acceptable formulae for Lao representation.

Ngon cabled Vientiane as requested, mentioning the Soviet demand and stating that, unless there was a "last-minute" change in the attitude of the RLG, the delegation was determined to maintain its present position: that it was the only delegation authorized to represent the Kingdom of Laos at the Conference table (see item 14 May).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 101, 13 May 61;  
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, 1372 (to Vientiane, 7), 13 May 61.

13 May

Secretary Rusk met with Gromyko in an effort to resolve the differences between the US and the USSR regarding the seating of Laotian delegations at the Geneva Conference. As reported by Rusk, Gromyko stated that he saw two possible solutions: 1) the seating of a coalition government if one satisfactory to all sides could be formed prior to the conference; or 2) the seating of representatives of the "three existing forces" in Laos. These were, according to Gromyko, the Souvanna Government, the Pathet Lao, and the "rebels" [the RLG].

Rusk refused to accept the seating of the Pathet Lao on the grounds that it was "merely the military arm of a political party" and not entitled to sit at what the US understood was to be a "conference of governments." As a compromise, Rusk then proposed that Laos not be officially represented at the conference but that individual Laotians be invited to express their views as individuals in some manner acceptable to the co-Chairmen.

Gromyko flatly rejected Rusk's proposal and said that the Conference could not begin without Laotian representation, which he reiterated would have to be tripartite. Rusk, in turn, refused to participate in the Conference on Gromyko's terms.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 94, 13 May 61.

13 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok, responding to the Secretary of State's inquiry concerning the intentions of the Thai Government with regard to participation in the Geneva Conference, reported that the Thai Government, as represented by its Foreign Minister, had serious doubts concerning Thai participation.

The Charge had conversed at length with Foreign Minister Thanat, who, although aware of the desirability of Thai representation, considered nevertheless that Thai attendance might do a "real disservice" to Thailand and its friends. Thanat had not reached his final decision, the crucial factor in which, the Charge reported, would be the US position and intentions at Geneva. Thanat was convinced that the UK and France were prepared to surrender Laos to the Communists, albeit through the "face saving" interim step of a Souvanna Prime Ministry. Moreover, the UK prestige was bound up in the Conference's achieving some sort of solution, and, as evidenced by the US's acceding to UK desires in SEATO (see item 5 May), the US position, Thanat feared, would ultimately hinge upon the "desire or need" to assuage the British. Implicitly, therefore, the US was also prepared to lose Laos.

Thanat had been most recently disturbed by reports that Lord Home, Mr. Gromyko, and Secretary Rusk had agreed to permit the attendance as observers at the Conference of all three Lao factions. The US Charge, although he had no knowledge of such an agreement, argued that it had been envisaged from the outset that it might be necessary, in order to get the Conference underway, to have the various factions attend as observers; indeed, the Communists would also be yielding a point in such an arrangement. Thanat felt, however, that the position of the RLG was one of the few US assets at the Conference, not to be bargained away before the Conference itself convened.

The Thai could see little advantage in attending the conference inasmuch as the present Communist solidarity and Allied disunity seemed to assure Communist gain. The US diplomat replied that a strong Thai representation would itself be an important factor at the Conference, and that neither the US nor Thailand should feel in any way committed

to any unacceptable conclusions of the Conference. To this, Thanat replied that attendance at the Conference would itself be a commitment. Moreover, Thanat felt that the UK would maneuver the US into accepting a damaging agreement. If Thailand left the Conference under these circumstances, the blame for failure would fall upon it.

The Charge concluded his message by urging that "some high level US expression, or unequivocal statement of [the US] position at Geneva" was necessary to dispel these Thai misgivings. Otherwise, the chance was "at least fifty-fifty" that the Thais would not attend the Conference (see items 14, 15, and 16 May).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2047, (to Geneva, 16), 13 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 84, (to Bangkok, 4), 12 May 61.

13 May Representatives of the RLG, PL, and Souvanna met at Ban Namone, according to Ambassador Brown, and agreed to inaugurate political and military discussions at that site. The representatives also issued a statement acknowledging that there was an effective cease-fire on all fronts. Additionally, in recognition of the fact that there were still some "trouble spots," each delegation agreed to reissue orders for all units to maintain the cease-fire that had been proclaimed on 3 May (see item).

On the following day, the Ambassador reported, Radio Vientiane broadcast the RLG's reissue of its cease-fire order.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2070, 14 May 61;  
(U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2073, 2077, 14 May 61.

13 May In a message to both the Department of State and to Ambassador Brown in Vientiane, Secretary Rusk stated that the US, French, and British delegates at Geneva had unanimously agreed that each would advise Phoumi and King Savang to use the "greatest care" in political negotiations with Souvanna and his half-brother Souphanouvong. Now that the cease-fire had been agreed upon (see preceding item) it would be a mistake, said Rusk, to enter into improvident political agreement under a feeling of pressure because of the Geneva Conference. The Secretary requested that the details and extent of any political commitments either made or being contemplated by the RLG be ascertained as soon as possible.

On the following day, in a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador in Vientiane reported that Phoumi had stated that political discussions, scheduled to start that day at Ban Namone, were necessary in order to obtain effective cease-fire terms. Phoumi did not anticipate, however, that there would be any concrete results from these talks.

In Phoumi's opinion, the delegations would be discussing "abstractions," while the "real issues"--the neutrality of Laos, elimination of outside interference, and Laotian foreign relations--would be

discussed at Geneva. The opposition at Ban Namone would bring up the questions of a unified delegation to Geneva and the establishment of a coalition government, while at the same time, the first question and possibly the second would be under consideration at Geneva. The Laotian General, therefore, had instructed the RLG cease-fire delegation to maintain King Savang's basic thesis that an internal political solution could not be reached until the necessary international framework had been agreed upon at the Geneva Conference. It would be necessary, Phoumi had declared, for political discussions at Ban Namone to continue as long as the Geneva Conference was in session.

Ambassador Brown reported that he had fully agreed with Phoumi on the general strategy of the political talks.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 104, 13 May 61;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2071, 14 May 61.

14 May The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs informed Secretary Rusk that the Laotian observer seating plan (see item 13 May) was "clearly within terms of instructions approved by [the] President. This point was specifically discussed with [the] President by Harriman and myself."

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 95, 14 May 61.

14 May Secretary Rusk reported that, according to Lord Home, Gromyko had refused to accept the observer formula for seating Laotians at the Geneva Conference (see item 13 May). The Soviet foreign minister, said Home, continued to insist that the three Laotian groups be seated on the basis of "full participation and equality." Gromyko then agreed to a formula by which the co-Chairmen would seat representatives from Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the conference.

Mr. Rusk also stated that the US delegation was seeking instructions on whether the US delegation should attend the conference if all three Laotian parties were seated. (See item 15 May for these instructions.)

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 116, 14 May 61, and SECTO 122, 14 May 61. NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

14 May Phoumi replied to his delegation's request for confirmation of instructions (see item 13 May) by reaffirming that the RLG was the only group entitled to sit at the Geneva Conference and to speak on behalf of the people of Laos. The Pathet Lao and the Souvanna group might be admitted to the conference as observers, Phoumi said; if they insisted on being so represented, however, the RLG would send representatives from all Laotian political parties to be similarly seated.

On the same day, Secretary Rusk was informing Ambassador Brown that the US would likely have to accept full participation of all three Laotian delegations in order to permit the conference to proceed. It would be extremely difficult for the US, the Secretary said, if the RLG should decide not to participate on the basis of equal representation. The Secretary therefore requested Ambassador Brown to emphasize to the RLG the importance which the US attached to the RLG's not objecting to the above formula. Brown should at the same time assure the



RLG that the US would seize every opportunity at the Conference to reiterate its position that the RLG was the only legal government in Laos, and urge the RLG to send instructions to its delegation. "sufficiently broad" to enable it to act in concert with the US on the matter of Lao representation. Rusk pointed out that the other representatives of Laos would not acquire legal status from being allowed to participate in the conference.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 119 (to Vientiane, 17), 14 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2072 (to Geneva, 23), 14 May 61.

14 May The Secretary of State again requested that the US Embassy in Thailand urge the Thai Government to send its delegation to Geneva as soon as possible, in order to lend its support to the US during the "crucial deliberations" of the opening business session of 17 May (see item).

Counselor Unger replied from Bangkok that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, undoubtedly influenced by reports of US resistance to Pathet Lao representation at Geneva, had stated that the Thai delegation would arrive at Geneva on 16 or 17 May. Thanat himself would necessarily stay in Thailand awaiting Vice President Johnson's visit, and would not decide upon his own attendance at Geneva until this visit had taken place and, presumably, the RTG was satisfied about US intentions (see items 15 and 16 May).

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 109 (to Bangkok, 10); Bangkok to SecState, 2053 (to Geneva, 19); both 14 May 61.

15 May Secretary Rusk, in a letter to Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, urged that the Thai Government send a strong delegation to Geneva. The US was handicapped at Geneva, wrote the Secretary, by the absence from Geneva of "vigorous delegations from states directly affected by events in Laos such as Thailand, Viet Nam and Laos itself."

Rusk described the efforts of the US to exclude the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations and attributed the failure of those efforts to the agreement of the RLG to discuss political questions as well as cease-fire matters with Souvanna and the Pathet Lao. These discussions had, according to the Secretary, "effectively undermined" the US position. (See item 16 May for Thanat's reactions)

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 126 (to Bangkok 15), 15 May 61.

15 May Secretary Rusk reported that, following receipt of instructions from the Department of State, he had informed Lord Home that the US could accept the formula to seat representatives of Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the Conference (see item 14 May).

According to the New York Times, this decision had been taken, following consultations between Rusk and President Kennedy, in order to "get as quickly as possible to the central purpose of the Conference," which was "an international agreement on the neutrality and independence of Laos and on international machinery to insure that neutrality and independence."

Later in the day the US formally proposed to the co-Chairmen that the delegate of the RLG be seated at the Conference.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 146, and (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 143, both 15 May 1961. NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

15 May Ambassador Brown reported to Secretary Rusk that in compliance with the Secretary's instructions (see item 14 May), he had "urged Phoumi most strongly" to instruct the RLG delegation to participate in the Geneva Conference. Phoumi had replied that such action would be an admission of the equality of the other side, which would totally undermine the RLG in its political negotiations at Ban Namone. The Ambassador then had pointed out that refusal of the RLG delegation to participate at the Geneva Conference would leave the field clear for the other side. Phoumi, reported Brown, had been unimpressed but had agreed to present the Ambassador's arguments to the King.

After the meeting with the King, reported Brown, Phoumi had stated to the British Ambassador that the RLG had confirmed its earlier decision to withdraw from the Conference if delegates of the other side were seated. The RLG would agree, however, to have no Laotian representation at the opening session but to have "all three groups take part in subsequent working meetings and committee sessions." (The Soviets had already rejected any formula calling for exclusion of all Laotian representation. See item 13 May.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2082 (to Geneva 32), 15 May 61.

16 May British Foreign Secretary Home, in a speech before the Geneva Conference, made the following conclusions:

1. Laos should remain a single united country with one government picked by the Laotians themselves. No independent power or parties should set themselves up as alternatives to the government.

2. Laos, to survive, must be genuinely neutral.

3. The struggle in Laos could never have reached its present intensity without importation of illegal arms. As a neutral, Laos would have no requirements for large quantities of weapons and should only want enough for internal security.

4. The Laotian economy had hardly developed. Assistance from outside, therefore, had a disproportionate influence on political events. This problem should be studied in an effort to find a method for cooperation rather than rivalry.

5. Experience with the ICC had taught some lessons regarding control and supervision, but the machinery should be re-examined in the light of present conditions.

Chen Yi, the delegate of Communist China, followed Home to the rostrum and proceeded to blame the US for all troubles in Laos. According to Chen Yi, the US had created SEATO as a tool for interference in internal Laotian affairs, had sabotaged efforts to create a coalition government in Laos, had supported a "rebel clique" in starting a civil war while still recognizing the Souvanna Government and continuing to provide it military aid, had instigated Chinese Nationalist remnants and certain SEATO members to participate in the civil war, and had established a MAAG to take direct command of "rebel" [RLG] operations.

A peaceful settlement of the Laos question, according to Chen Yi, would have internal and international aspects. Internal matters could only be settled by the Laotians themselves; the international aspect required all conference participants jointly to insure the independence and neutrality of Laos. Neutrality for Laos would mean that Laos could not join any military alliances, no foreign military bases could be established in Laos, no foreign power should be permitted to use force or the threat of force against Laos, no country should be permitted to use aid as a means to violate Laotian neutrality, all US military personnel must be withdrawn, and all Chinese Nationalist remnants should be disarmed and withdrawn.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 159, 17 May 61.

16 May

CINCPAC replied to the JCS message of 13 May (see item 12 May) concerning a plan for holding southern Laos in case the conference at Geneva should fail. Observing that the choice of a demarcation line was the key to defining the military objective of such a plan, CINCPAC devoted his dispatch to that subject. In one of his general comments, referring to the JCS statement that the choice of a demarcation line was essentially a political decision tempered by military considerations, CINCPAC questioned

whether in the ultimate event military could be subordinated to political considerations in making this decision. For various political or military reasons, cited individually for each of the possibilities, he viewed all six of the possible demarcation lines suggested by the JCS as unacceptable. He then described a demarcation line--a modification of one of those suggested by the JCS--that would, he said, "neither liquidate current holdings in Laos nor preclude prospects for survival of a free Laos." He identified the line as follows:

From the triple intersection of the Phong Saly, Nam Tha, Luang Prabang provincial borders roughly south southwest along the Nam Tha-Luang Prabang provincial border to the Muong border between Muong Nam and Muong Muongsay in Luang Prabang Province; thence roughly south-southeast through Luang Prabang Province passing along the eastern Muong borders of Muong Nam Nga, Muong Luang Prabang and Muong Kieng Ngeum to the provincial border of Kieng Khouang; thence southwards, eastwards and northwards following the border of Kieng Khouang Province to the triple intersection of the Kieng Khouang and Khammouane provincial borders with the frontier of North Viet Nam; thence southwards along the frontier of Laos and North Viet Nam to the DML dividing Viet Nam.

The advantages of this line, CINCPAC said, included its utilization of existing administrative boundaries, thus dispensing with the need for surveying and fixing new lines; the affording of protection to Thailand's frontier from direct contact with Communist areas; the retention of both the traditional capital of Luang Prabang and the administrative capital of Vientiane; and the retention of the minimum military objectives of both SEATO and US unilateral contingency plans. The proposed plan had the disadvantage, he acknowledged, that the Communists were certain to insist on more territory in any partition.

Some additional factors that should be considered in designing a demarcation line were the following, CINCPAC added: 1) Communist influence had been predominant in Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces for years; 2) Souvanna Phouma and his family had been predominant in the Luang Prabang area; 3) Meo tribesmen had been fighting the Pathet Lao, were organized under their own leaders, and would continue to be a subversive problem to the Pathet Lao if provided with the means to fight; 4) Sananikone influence could be counted on to help the RLG hold north of Vientiane; 5) Boun Oum's south and Phoui's Mekong center could work together; 6) the King in Luang Prabang could continue to be a respected symbol provided Luang Prabang remained free of Pathet Lao control; and 7) the demarcation line should follow definable terrain features or province lines.

CINCPAC recommended that the demarcation line described earlier in his dispatch be considered the line beyond which the US and its SEATO allies would not be pushed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160438Z May 61.

16 May Counselor Unger reported from Bangkok to the Secretary of State at Geneva that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat had been deeply appreciative of the Secretary's letter of 15 May (see item).

Thanat continued to think, however, that in view of the continued uncertainties of the negotiations at Geneva, it would be of assistance to the US if the Thai Government continued to withhold its presence from the Conference. He had therefore instructed the Thai delegation arriving at Geneva today not to participate. Thanat himself planned to arrive in Geneva on 19 May and asked that, in the meantime, the US tell him what it considered would be the most helpful posture for the Thai Government and its representatives to assume.

In a reply of the same day, Secretary Rusk stated that the common interests of Thailand and the US would be "greatly assisted" by a strong Thai delegation contributing directly and forcefully to the Geneva negotiations (see item 19 May).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2061 (to Geneva, 23), 16 May 61; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 158 (to Bangkok, 21), 16 May 61.

16 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that ICC Chairman Sen had, in conversation with Brown on 14 May, conceded the need for a more detailed cease-fire agreement, in view of the hostilities aroused by the resupply of the scattered troops behind enemy lines. Sen had termed the ICC "powerless," under its present terms of reference, to investigate complaints in the absence of a detailed agreement on troop positions and cease-fire conditions. In any event, Sen believed, ICC teams sent to "trouble spots" had not, in his experience, ascertained the truth of charges and counter-charges. The teams could, however, dampen the hostilities. (Brown on the following day, reported that he had later told the ICC Chairman and the Canadian ICC delegate that the existing cease-fire agreement, though it lacked detailed provisions, did require the services of the ICC. Brown felt that, although the ICC would have to ignore troop movements and questions of "who attacked whom," it could at least ascertain the fact of actual shooting and would, by its presence, probably cause the shooting to cease.)

Sen had hinted, Brown reported, that the Ambassador should dissuade the RLG from filing complaints with the ICC, inasmuch as this would only inspire counter-charges and deepen existing suspicions.

After some argument, Sen acknowledged the presence of substantial numbers of Viet Minh technicians among the Pathet Lao forces, but at the same time called attention to the presence of US and Thai advisers among the FAL troops.

Sen made a major effort, Brown continued, to persuade Brown that Phoumi should be urged to agree to a coalition government. Sen had pointed to the lack of popular support for the Boun Oum regime, and had opined that, whatever the relative strengths of the factions, the Souvanna and Pathet Lao groups were at least

"significant" and therefore had to be included in a "truly neutral" government. Brown, dismissing as foolish any effort to distinguish between Souvanna supporters and Pathet Lao, emphasized the pointlessness of a "neutral" government that was in fact Communist dominated. He stated that apart from the Phoumi group there were important conservative elements in Laos that must be represented in a properly balanced coalition. No harm was done, Brown said, by delaying the formation of a coalition government, inasmuch as the intentions of the Communists were not yet known and the "international framework" for such a government had not yet been erected.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2088 and 2095, 16 and 17 May 61.

17 May

As reported by Secretary Rusk, the delegate of the Souvanna group made the following requests of the nations attending the Geneva Conference: 1) make a declaration recognizing the neutrality of Laos based on the Geneva agreements, the Vientiane Accords of 1957, and the Souphanouvang-Souvanna declaration of November 1960; 2) cease military aid to "rebels" and not introduce military forces or establish military bases in Laos; 3) cancel SEATO protection for Laos; 4) abstain from interference in Laotian internal affairs; and 5) respect the unity, territorial integrity, and independence of Laos.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 170, 17 May 61.

17 May

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at the Geneva Conference tabled two drafts embodying the Soviet position on Laos. These drafts were 1) a declaration of neutrality of Laos, and 2) an agreement for withdrawal of foreign troops and terms of reference for the ICC.

1. The Declaration of Neutrality. The Conferees, according to the Soviet draft, would reaffirm the principles of Laotian sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity. Taking into account that Laos solemnly pledged not to participate in military alliances, or to permit foreign military bases or troops on Laotian soil, the Conferees would pledge not to interfere in internal Laotian affairs or to involve Laos in military alliances. They would pledge not to station troops or to establish bases on Laotian territory, and to refrain from the use or threat of force. The Conferees would agree that clauses in all existing treaties, including SEATO, at variance with this declaration would lose force. All foreign military personnel would be withdrawn within a specified period. In the event of a threat to or violation of the independence of Laos, the parties to this declaration would agree to consult on measures to be taken to remove such a threat.

2. Agreement on Troop Withdrawal and Terms of Reference for the ICC.

Chapter 1. Withdrawal of foreign troops and military personnel.

Article 1. All foreign military units and military personnel shall be withdrawn from Laos.

within 30 days from the entry into force of the present agreement. The term "foreign military personnel" shall include all foreign military missions, military advisers, instructors, consultants, observers and any other foreign military persons, including those serving in the Armed Forces in Laos, as well as all foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing and utilization of war material.

Article 2. The withdrawal of foreign military units and military personnel from Laos shall be executed along routes and through points that shall be determined jointly by the representatives of the three political forces in Laos (or by the government of Laos).

Article 3. It shall be prohibited to introduce into Laos any foreign military units and military personnel mentioned in article 1 of the present agreement.

Article 4. Upon entry into force of the present agreement the introduction into Laos of any kind of armaments, munitions and war materials, except for the defense of Laos, shall be terminated.

Article 5. In accordance with the request of the Laotian authorities the international commission for supervision and control in Laos . . . shall exercise supervision and control over the cease-fire in Laos. It shall conduct its work strictly within the limits of the cease-fire agreement, entered into by the three political forces in Laos, and in close co-operation with the Laotian authorities.

Article 6. The international commission shall be entrusted with supervision and control over the withdrawal of foreign troops and military personnel, as is provided for by the article 1 of this agreement.

Article 7. On the instructions of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference the International Commission shall investigate cases of violation of the clauses of article 3 of the present agreement concerning the prohibition of the introduction into Laos of any foreign military units and military personnel.

Article 8. The International Commission shall conduct its entire work on supervision and control in cooperation with the government of Laos which shall render it all possible assistance in its activities. To perform its functions under article 6 the commission in accord with the government of Laos, shall set up the appropriate groups.

Article 9. The decisions of the International Commission on all questions shall be



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adopted unanimously, except for decisions on purely procedural questions which shall be adopted by a majority vote.

Article 10. The International Commission shall conduct its work under the general guidance and supervision of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954.

Article 11. The costs involved in the operation of the International Commission shall be divided among all the states participants in the International Conference . . . .

Article 12. The question of the length of time during which the International Commission is to function shall be decided by the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the government of Laos, who in three years time shall hold appropriate consultations on this matter and shall inform all the parties to the present agreement of their decision. If necessary the government of Laos may raise before the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference the question of the termination of the operation of the International Commission before the end of the above-mentioned period.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 170, 17 May 61; (U) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO's 167, 168, 17 May 61.

17 May The RLG, in letters to its delegation at Geneva and to the US Ambassador at Vientiane, reaffirmed its position at the Geneva Conference. This position, as stated to the US Ambassador, was as follows:

The legal Royal Government, constitutionally established, solemnly installed by the sovereign and sanctioned by the Royal Ordinance, sends its delegation, which is the only one competent to represent Laos and to speak in the name of the Kingdom of Laos, to Geneva.

Laos will participate at the Conference if this delegation is the only one allowed to sit in the meeting room. The other parties representing the different political tendencies (including the representatives of the neutralists of the Souvanna Phouma group or the representative of the NLHX group) should be admitted only in observer status.

If the two representatives of the two other Lao political tendencies continue to be permitted to be present at the working sessions, the RLG will not be able to authorize the governmental delegation to participate in them. This delegation will withdraw definitively from the Conference. At the same time, the RLG will be able to authorize the representatives of the five

political parties of Laos to sit facing the representatives of the two other neutralist and pro-Communist political factions . . . .

As for wanting to seat the five representatives of the parties behind the government delegation, while the representation of the pro-Communist ex-NLHX group is given its place there as a delegate on equal legal status with the governmental delegate, the RLG would not be able to consent.

If all of these proposals of the RLG cannot be retained, the RLG considers that the Geneva Conference could meet without the participation of Laos and decide on the solution of the recognized and guaranteed neutrality of Laos.

The RLG had remained steadfast in this position despite the entreaties of US and allied officials at Geneva and Vientiane (see items 13, 14, 15 May).

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1791, 16 May 61;  
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2122, (to Geneva, 65), 20 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2093 (to Geneva, 40), 17 May 61.

17 May Ambassador Brown commented to the Secretary of State upon "certain new facts and trends" in the situation of the Meos which required, in Brown's opinion, some modification of the "purposes and limitations" of the State Department's policy message of 9 May (see item). Among the factors and comments included in Brown's message were the following:

1. Large numbers of enemy troops had been freed by the partial cease-fire, and the enemy had embarked upon a "fairly widespread and determined effort to locate and disperse or destroy" the Meo auto-defense units. This enemy activity was compelling the redeployment of the Meo units from exposed positions north and east of the Plaine des Jarres to areas northwest and southeast of the plain. This redeployment removed the Meo threat to the enemy supply routes. On the other hand, however, the Meo were now located on an arc of rugged terrain that commanded all approaches from the Plaine des Jarres westward to Luang Prabang and southward to Vientiane, and that afforded concealed lateral movement and reinforcement and sufficient depth for maneuver.

2. The ICC was precluded by its present terms of reference from any effective investigation of the cease-fire, especially in areas such as the Meos held. Until and unless the Geneva Conference altered the ICC terms of reference, therefore, the ICC would be of little "defensive value" to the Meo forces.

3. As the Communists pressed their efforts to disperse the Meos, considerable numbers of them could be expected to resettle in areas where RLG or US help could be had.

In view of the above facts, Brown offered the following point-by-point comments upon the State Department's 9 May directives (see item).

1. While agreeing that the arming of additional Meo was probably neither necessary nor wise, Brown felt that the arming of Meos who wished to join auto-defense units and defend their home might be desired by the US and RLG and would in any event be politically very difficult to refuse.

2. It appeared to Brown that the Meo could be expected not only to resist enemy attacks but to counterattack and create diversionary pressures. It would be very difficult under these circumstances to confine US aid to food and ammunition, as the State Department had stipulated. In fact, it had already been necessary to provide additional weapons to reinforce Ban Padong. Only if the ICC could effectively inspect the Meo areas, Brown said, should supplies be limited to food and ammunition and even then resupply of weapons might occasionally be necessary.

3. Phoumi had on 16 May (see item) submitted a formal complaint to the ICC chairman concerning the continued fighting at Ban Padong and had in the same document requested a formal ICC investigation. The ICC Chairman had told Brown on 17 May (see item 16 May for a similar statement) that he was reluctant even to receive complaints since he felt that the ICC was powerless to act.

4. Brown doubted that resupply limited to food and ammunition would under the present circumstances suffice to appease Meo's feelings of "doubt and restiveness." Hence, Brown had recommended the "more realistic measures" in 2. above.

5. Brown agreed that the US should seek at the Geneva Conferences to obtain protection for Laotian minorities, but felt that the US must explain carefully to the RLG that this proposal did not provide political separation of the Meos from the RLG.

6., 7., and 8. Brown concurred.

9. Brown described the weapons delivered to Meo auto-defense units as resembling closely the weapons normally provided by the FAL to such units. The only preferential treatment, according to Brown, was the promptness of resupply, which could be attributed to the Meos' being under attack.

17 May

Secretary of State Rusk enunciated to the Geneva Conference the US position on the Laotian question.

Secretary Rusk stated that the most immediate problem was "to insure an effective cease-fire, to give the ICC the necessary and relevant instructions and to give it the resources required to carry out its vital task"; the completion of these tasks was

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prerequisite to the Geneva Conference having any constructive results. Next, the Secretary continued, the Conference should turn to the problem of establishing and insuring a genuinely neutral Laos. The Secretary considered it too early in the Conference to present detailed proposals for achieving this neutrality, but not too early to begin considering the broad outline of a program directed to this goal. The consideration of this outline would involve the following three points:

1. A definition of the concept of neutrality, as it applied to Laos, that all the Geneva conferees could pledge themselves to respect. This definition should "go beyond the classical concept of nonalignment and include positive assurance of the integrity of the elements of national life."

2. The development of effective international machinery for maintaining the neutrality of Laos against both internal and external threats.

3. The establishment of a substantial economic and technical aid program for Laos.

The Secretary, expanding upon these points, stated that, for Laotian neutrality to be realized, foreign military personnel, except those specified by the 1954 Geneva Accords, should be withdrawn from Laos. The US would gladly withdraw, said Rusk, "if the 'Viet-Minh brethren' and other elements who have entered Laos from the northeast return to their homes." Furthermore, the US had no desire to send military equipment into Laos, had no military bases in Laos and wanted none, and had no interest in Laos as a staging area or thoroughfare for agents, saboteurs, or guerrillas.

Secretary Rusk then listed five attributes that the US proposed for a peace-keeping machinery for Laos:

1. The control machinery must have full access to all parts of Laos without the need for the consent of any civil or military officials.

2. It must have its own transportation and communication equipment sufficient to the task.

3. It must be able to act on any complaint from responsible sources, including personnel of the control body itself, Laotian officials, governments of neighboring states, and the respective governments of the members of the Geneva Conference.

4. The control body should act by a majority rule, not be paralyzed by a veto; and there should be provision for both majority and minority reports.

5. The control body should have some effective means of informing governments, and the world at large, of any finding that the conditions of peace and neutrality had been violated.

Finally, declaring the necessity for economic aid to Laos, the Secretary suggested that a neutral nations commission composed of Southeast Asian neutrals administer such aid, and invited the USSR to join with the US in underwriting the cost of such an aid program.

(U) NYT, 18 May 61, 1, 4 (text on p. 4).

18 May

Secretary Rusk reported from the Geneva Conference that the Indian delegate, Krishna Menon, had delivered a lengthy "disjointed recitation" of the Indian view of the purposes of the Geneva Conference. In the course of his rambling, the Indian delegate, distinguishing between the internal and external aspects of the Laotian problems, spoke against interference by the conference in the internal affairs of Laos. He also emphasized the importance of the 1954 Geneva Accords and the creditable job that the ICC had performed under these Accords.

Speaking next, the Pathet Lao delegate repeated in general the points made by the Souvanna delegate, endorsed the draft proposals tabled by the Soviets, and rejected Secretary Rusk's proposal that the ICC have access to all of Laos as equivalent to intervention in internal Laotian affairs. He also condemned the idea of an international body to control economic aid.

French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville followed the Pathet Lao delegate to the rostrum. As reported by Secretary Rusk, Couve, after calling on the ICC to enforce the cease-fire, recommended a return to the principles of the Geneva Accords. Since some adjustments were necessary, however, the French delegate considered the following measures desirable: 1) a declaration by the Laotian Government of its sovereign independence and neutrality, entailing political and military non-alignment and exclusion of foreign bases and military instructors from Laos except as provided by the Geneva Accords; 2) a parallel declaration by the conference powers to respect the Laotian Government declaration; and 3) a protocol annex formulating conditions for the ICC to supervise implementation of the military aspects of these declarations.

(Draft proposals of 1) and 2) were tabled by the French delegation on 23 May 61.)

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 179, 19 May 61, and CONFE 39, 24 May 61.

18 May

Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State that Gromyko had raised as a matter of concern the charge that a considerable number of KMT irregulars still remained in Laos, notwithstanding the approximately 4,300 who had been evacuated from the Burma-Thai-Laos area during March and April. The Secretary of State urgently requested any information, additional to the data received in early May, that would cover the following points: 1) how many KMT's still remained in the area; 2) where were they located; 3) how many had arms; and 4) how many were engaged in non-military activities.

In response to the Secretary's request, Acting Secretary Bowles informed Rusk later the same day that information available in the Department at that time indicated the following: approximately 1200-1600 KMT's on the Thai-Laos border; 800 in the Thai-Burma frontier; and possibly 500 in Laos.

(Reports to the Department of State by US diplomatic missions in the countries concerned contained only the following additional information: 1) from the Ambassador to Burma a report that, according to Burmese officials, approximately 500-600 KMT irregulars remained in Burma and 800 in Laos; 2) from the Ambassador to Nationalist China a report that, according to Chinese Nationalist authorities, about 600 irregulars remained in Burma, 500-700 along the Thailand-Burma border, and about 260 in Laos, of whom 160 had joined Phoumi's forces. The Ambassador to Burma confirmed the State Department figure of 800 irregulars along the Thailand-Burma border.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 175, 18 May 61; (S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 198, 18 May 61; (S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 735, 22 May 61; (C) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 883, 23 May 61.

18 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that the RLG had, at the Ban Namone meeting of the previous day, agreed to place discussions of a coalition government first on the agenda of future meetings. The RLG had made this concession, said the Ambassador, in order to obtain Pathet Lao agreement to the principle of a tri-partite Lao military commission to aid the ICC in the regulation of the cease-fire; however, Phoumi had later told Brown, the RLG had agreed to discussions of a coalition only "in principle" and would in fact insist that the activities of the tri-partite teams be discussed at the next meeting. (On 19 May, when the Ban Namone meetings resumed, the RLG did indeed insist that this military matter be considered. The other side demanded strict compliance with the agenda order, and the meeting ended without settlement of this issue. (See items 22 May and 26 May.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2105, 18 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2100, 18 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2116, 19 May 61.

19 May Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko announced that the Geneva co-Chairmen had agreed to ask the ICC to formulate its technical requirements for enforcing the Laotian cease-fire, reported the US Consul General in Geneva. Gromyko stated that the co-Chairmen would consider this matter again when the ICC reply was in hand.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 187, 19 May 61.

19 May Ambassador Young recounted to the Secretary of State the substance of a meeting at Bangkok between Vice President Johnson and Thai Prime Minister Sarit.

The Vice President had begun by stating that Thai participation in the Geneva Conference was so essential that he would even urge that Sarit himself attend. When Sarit expressed doubt at the prospects of useful results from the Conference, the Vice President replied that

the Conference probably would not produce any useful results if no influential leaders attended. It was President Kennedy's idea, said Johnson, that "strong men" be at Geneva "talking turkey" so that people throughout the world would be convinced that the Free World was making every effort to achieve a peaceful solution.

In a discussion of Thai military capabilities, Sarit assured Vice President Johnson that the Thais had over 5,000 men ready to move into Laos immediately, and "any number required" if the situation demanded; both of these commitments hinged, however, upon the proviso: "if the US is also ready to move."

The Vice President then asked Sarit if he believed it wise to have "Americans, white men," fighting in Asia, or would it be better for the US to provide "every manner of aid and equipment" to natives of Southeast Asia. Also, the Vice President noted that US intervention might trigger a Chinese Communist response, which would tie the US down in Laos, leaving open to Communist pressures the several other critical areas on the Bloc perimeter. To all these arguments, Sarit maintained his point that no Asian nation would intervene in Laos unless the US participated with troops.

Looking to the contingency of failure at Geneva, the Vice President suggested that the countries of Southeast Asia confer with one another now, to determine what should be done if the Conference should fail and to submit a "concrete proposition" to the U.S. Pressed by Sarit for a more specific statement of US intentions, the Vice President stated that it was "not possible to speak with finality at this time," because of the present state of US public opinion. The US Congress, the Vice President continued, believed that the US public was not prepared to send US troops into Laos, especially when there presumably were ample pro-Western troops in the immediate area.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2096, 19 May 61.

19 May CINCPAC, in a message to the JCS, endorsed "heartily" the State Department's proposals and Ambassador Brown's suggested modifications of the programs for supporting the Meo tribesmen (see items 9 and 17 May). CINCPAC added the notion that the Meos represented an organized nucleus upon which could be built a "counter-Communist" covert effort which would be available to the RLG and the West regardless of the outcome of current political negotiations.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 190359Z May 61.

20 May The JCS commented by memorandum on the concept for a divided Laos, tentatively titled Operation PORK CHOP, referred for their consideration by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 12 May.

Operation PORK CHOP was a proposal designed to meet the need for military contingency planning contemplated by the President's instructions of 9 May (see item) in case the Geneva Conference on Laos should fail. PORK CHOP was based on the conclusion that 1) it was in the US interest to prevent the emergence of a "weak, leftist-



oriented but unified Laos," and 2) the alternative was "a divided Laos, with the free part firmly aligned against Communist control." The free part, according to this concept, should include the Mekong River Valley and southern Laos. The most desirable division of Laos was recognized as probably unobtainable--that is, one restricting the Pathet Lao to Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces. Similarly, the prospect for obtaining the second most desirable dividing line was regarded as dubious--that is, the line separating the RLG and Pathet Lao forces in northern Laos, with the Pathet Lao forces in southern Laos being evacuated. The final position on partition, according to Operation PORK CHOP, would require a dividing line created by giving the Pathet Lao additional territory in the north as compensation for surrender of territory held in the south; such a line was seen as allowing anti-Communist control of the Mekong Valley and southern Laos, with room for future operations to stop Viet Cong "incursion through Laos to Thailand and South Viet Nam."

Operation PORK CHOP recommended that the US participate in the Geneva Conference with the concealed intention of producing an impasse by insisting on a genuinely neutral and independent Laos. The impasse would result, according to the plan, because the Communists would be forced to reveal their true intentions, namely, the virtual surrender of Laos. When the impasse was reached and the resumption of hostilities appeared possible, the operation below should be undertaken (alternatively, the operation could be triggered by Pathet Lao breach of the cease-fire with offensive action):

The US and/or SEATO, announcing absence of aggressive intent, would move forces into Laos to protect the Royal Lao Government against further aggression. The forces would be rapidly deployed to Vientiane, Seno, Thakhek, and Paksane. US/SEATO/Lao forces would then move to eliminate Pathet Lao pockets and establish control of essential areas (indicated on a map appended to Operation PORK CHOP); linking these areas with patrols and striking at incursions with helicopter-borne guerrilla forces would permit the combined forces to secure free Laos against Pathet Lao offensives. Intensive efforts to train and reorganize the FAL would be continued throughout the operation with a view to rendering the FAL self-sustaining, thereby permitting eventual withdrawal of US/SEATO forces. (An alternative plan for US forces intervening alone was included in the exposition of Operation PORK CHOP.)

Operation PORK CHOP claimed the following political advantages: 1) the deployment of US forces to Laos would a) prove to free Asian nations that the US was willing and able to act for their protection, b) demonstrate US willingness to honor treaty commitments, c) validate the SEATO concept, and d) demonstrate to neutrals and Communists US and SEATO determination to match force with force; 2) US/SEATO forces established in Laos would give the US a position of greater strength at the 14-Nation Conference.

The following political disadvantages were acknowledged: 1) British and French co-operation would be difficult to

obtain; 2) some neutrals might consider "Western intervention" unjustified; 3) the Communist bloc might use the opportunity to create serious problems elsewhere, e.g., in Berlin or Iran; and 4) the deployment of forces at this time might seriously disrupt the 14-Nation Conference concept.

The following military advantages were claimed for Operation PORK CHOP: 1) occupation of key centers by a noncombat operation; 2) protection of a substantial portion of Laos and key movement routes from Communist control and use; 3) prevention of the emergence of a Communist state on the borders of Thailand, Viet Nam, and Cambodia; and 4) the rendering of US support of Thailand and Viet Nam easier and less expensive.

The following military disadvantages were recognized: 1) involvement of US forces under burdensome conditions with respect to terrain, climate, and logistics; 2) the resulting production of an imbalance of US forces in the Pacific and a possible need for increased readiness preparations in the US; 3) the possibility of consequent involvement with North Viet Nam and Communist China; and 4) the creation of a situation making withdrawal of US forces in the near future most difficult.

The JCS commented that they considered the basic objective of Operation PORK CHOP feasible from a military point of view. They pointed out, however, that the partition line shown on the map accompanying that plan represented the least desirable of the lines mentioned in the plan and that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) had acknowledged the preferability of the line proposed by CINCPAC (see item 16 May). This latter line, recommended by the JCS, was set forth in the appendix to the JCS memorandum, with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages closely following CINCPAC's discussion (see item 16 May).

In further comment the JCS reiterated their view that the question of Laos could not be considered apart from Thailand and South Viet Nam and the relationship of these countries to Southeast Asia as a whole. The JCS again recommended the deployment of "suitable" forces to South Viet Nam and Thailand. In the opinion of the JCS such forces would, by their physical presence, be a stabilizing factor in the security of Southeast Asia, and at the same time they would provide an effective nucleus for possible future US and/or SEATO intervention in Laos.

The JCS reaffirmed their opinion that any intervention with US forces in Laos, unilaterally or under SEATO auspices, should be preceded by a firm US governmental decision committing the US by such intervention to make the necessary effort to achieve a successful outcome regardless of the possible Communist escalation. The decision to make such an effort, the JCS said, was fundamental to US military action. (See item 9 May.)

In view of the foregoing considerations, the JCS continued, it was their belief that existing CINCPAC and SEATO plans must be utilized for at least the initial operations of a military intervention in Laos. Military

plans for overseas operations of the magnitude envisioned in Operation PORK CHOP must be prepared in a deliberate manner, they warned, if unacceptable risks were to be avoided. Moreover, it should be fully realized that US intervention in Laos might provoke North Vietnamese and Communist Chinese intervention. It was therefore recommended that the military advice of the JCS be utilized from the outset in the preparation of plans for military operations such as those that might stem from the directive of 9 May 1961.

(TS) JCSM-340-61 to SecDef, "A Concept for a Divided Laos (S)," 20 May 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/995, 17 May 61, as revised by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/995, 20 May 1961; (TS) JCS 1992/989, 15 May 61.

20 May

The ICC report to the Geneva co-Chairmen, later relayed from Geneva to the Department of State, reviewed the ICC's activities from 15 to 20 May. The Commission reported that at Ban Namone on 17 May, the warring factions had "agreed in principle" to consider the formation of a coalition government first, followed immediately by an examination of questions relating to the cease-fire. However, alleged violations of the cease-fire had caused the Boun Oum representative to annul this understanding on 19 May. Recriminations were hurled by both sides at this juncture; but the parties had nonetheless agreed to meet again on 22 May.

Regarding alleged cease-fire violations, the ICC reported that it had received the first written complaint from the Vientiane authorities on 16 May, followed quickly by a host of other complaints from the same source. In view of its "basic task" (see item 6 May), the ICC had decided to discuss these complaints with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. In these discussions, held at Xieng Khouang on 18 May, both Souvanna and Souphanouvong had assured the ICC representatives that their troops had not violated the cease-fire and that whatever actions their troops might have taken had been either under provocation or in self-defense.

The absence of a detailed cease-fire agreement made difficult the ICC's decisions of what to enforce, the Commission reported. Moreover, it was almost impossible to define provocation in the Laotian military situation. For example, the aerial resupply of Ban Padong was considered provocative by the Pathet Lao, whose consequent attacks were likewise termed provocative by the Boun Oum Government. Also, the confusion engendered by the terrain and foliage and the proximity of opposing forces made it almost impossible to fix upon the first provocative act.

To avoid such confusion in the future, the ICC proposed the following actions:

1. Renewed orders should be issued to all troops not only to maintain the cease-fire, but to desist from provocations; all parties should formally assure the ICC that this had been done.

2. The ICC should assume, with the co-operation of both sides, control and supervision of the resupply of isolated garrisons.

3. Such aerial flights over hostile territory as were not thus controlled by the ICC should be discontinued.

4. The parties at Ban Namone should discuss incidents among themselves and dispel thereby many misunderstandings.

The ICC then presented various other aspects of the Laotian situation that were engendering tensions: competition for civilian support; the treating of civilian disturbances as military actions; the arming of hostile tribes not having loyalty to any government; the seeming desire of both sides to consolidate gains; and the frequency of defections which were viewed by the losing side as hostile acts by the gaining side.

Because of these many problems, the ICC concluded, the situation could not be put right unless the Laotian factions agreed, in parallel with their political negotiations, to establish a machinery by which the ICC could supervise and control the cease-fire.

Finally, the ICC expressed the hopes to the co-Chairmen that external military supply of the Laotian groups would "cease forthwith," that all foreign advisers introduced into Laos since 1954 would be withdrawn, that the problems mentioned in this report would be discussed at Geneva, and that the co-Chairmen would further instruct the ICC on its next tasks (see following item).

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 26, 23 May 61.

21 May The Chairman of the ICC, in similar letters to Boun Oum, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong, set forth the Commission's proposals and hopes for the reduction of military tensions in Laos, as embodied in his report to the Geneva co-Chairmen (see preceding item). Also, the Chairmen expressed the intention of the ICC to visit the Ban Padong region and other areas to satisfy itself that an effective cease-fire existed throughout Laos.

(See item 25 May for Boun Oum's reply.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2141, 24 May 61.

22 May The US Ambassador to Thailand, Kenneth T. Young, reported to the Secretary of State the progress of the SEATO Council of Representatives upon the required political actions in support of Plan 5 (see items 13 and 28 April, 4 May), as follows:

1. The following actions had been agreed upon:
  - a. Definition of Communist insurgency (Action 1).
  - b. Designation of Thailand as "appointed nation" (Action 2).
  - c. Assignment of force commander and deputy commander responsibilities among the SEATO nations (Action 3).
  - d. Directive to SEATO Force Commander (Action 4).
  - e. Appointment of political adviser to the SEATO Force (Action 5).
  - f. Issuance of situation assessments and warnings by the Council Representatives (Action 6).

2. Further progress on the question of sharing costs (Action 7) could not be made until the Department of State supplied instructions to the US representative.

3. All representatives had agreed, with the French and British agreements subject to governmental confirmation, that formal status of forces agreements (Action 8) should be dispensed with. Also, a "consensus" had been reached that the SEATO military advisers would prepare, in lieu of status of forces agreements, a list of provisions for the guidance of the Force Commanders and would not refer back to the Council unless there was disagreement on "major points." All representatives except France had agreed that the responsibility for status of forces arrangements in Thailand should rest with the SEATO Force Commander; all representatives except France and Thailand had agreed that the responsibility for similar arrangements in Laos should rest with the Field Forces Commander.

4. No further progress had been made toward agreement upon the following:

- a. Manner of contacts between SEATO Commanders and the RTG and RLG (Action 9).
- b. "Mission and concept" of the SEATO force (Action 10).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2112, 22 May 61.

22 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that the RLG representatives felt that the atmosphere at Ban Namone was "most oppressive psychologically." Ambassador Brown recounted the many concessions the RLG had made to PL intransigence: 1) abandoning the proposal that the talks be held at Luang Prabang; 2) accepting rebuff on its offer to hold military discussions at Hin Heup; 3) accepting similar rebuff on its offer to attend military talks at Ban Namone if political talks proceeded simultaneously at Phon Hong; 4) acceding to the holding of all talks at Ban Namone; and finally, 5) agreeing to give first priority to discussion of political affairs. The feeling within the RLG was, Brown continued, that the lack of "strong united Western support" had helped to bring the RLG thus far along the road of concession. "The RLG feels abandoned by its friends," one Ban Namone delegate had commented, and only the US could restore a spirit of confidence by giving assurance to the RLG that it would not be deserted if the civil war should be resumed.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2129, 22 May 61.

22 May The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the Australian Minister at Washington had expressed his government's growing concern over the Pathet Lao attacks upon Ban Padong and the ICC's failure to act to halt these operations. The Australians were also concerned about reports that ICC Chairman Sen was playing a role in the domestic political aspects of the cease-fire talks in Laos. The Minister stated that the ICC had no mandate to participate either in the formation of a coalition government or in the selection of a delegation to attend the Geneva Conference.

The Secretary related that the Australian Minister had been told that the US shared these Australian concerns;

Ambassador Brown was requested to provide his estimate of the ICC's role in Laotian domestic politics (see item 26 May).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1273, 22 May 61.

22 May Consul General Martin reported from Geneva that the representatives of Burma and Cambodia, the two neutral nations contiguous to Laos, had presented their views to the Geneva Conference.

Burmese Foreign Minister Sao Hkun Khio, in a brief presentation, declared that the solution to the Laotian situation lay in a return to the 1954 Geneva Accords, reinforced by a new Laotian neutrality declaration, recognized by this Geneva Conference.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Tiouloung noted hopefully the "striking concordance" among the conferees in the matter of general principles. However, Cambodia recognized that, on the substantive question of control, there remained serious differences. Cambodia, for its part, agreed with the USSR that international control as conceived by the US could become an instrument for foreign interference. On the other hand, the Soviet counterproposal, requiring unanimity both in the ICC and between the co-Chairmen, went too far in the other direction, creating an ICC "half-paralyzed by 'triple veto.'" The Cambodian declared that a "middle solution acceptable to all" must be found. He submitted no proposals to accomplish this end, but expressed support of certain proposals put forward by Canada designed to render the ICC more effective.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 24, 22 May 61.

23 May The Departments of State and Defense and the CIA expressed, in a joint message to "Geneva," their objections to the recommendations of the ICC (see item 20 May). Selected for specific comment were the ICC recommendations that it control the resupply of isolated garrisons and that all other aerial flights over "hostile" territory be discontinued; the "basic objections" of the US to these proposals were as follows:

1. Without an effective cease-fire, the support of FAL units, including Meo units under attack, was a matter that could not be negotiated.

2. Even if a cease-fire were established, certain isolated FAL units could only be supplied the "necessities of life" by air; the discontinuance of flights over hostile territory would hamper this resupply.

3. Since the ICC had not taken cognizance of the Soviet airlift, the ICC proposition was "one-sided," in that it inhibited only the supply of the FAL and did not provide for the cessation of the Soviet airlift.

4. Since there was not yet any agreement on the rules of ICC procedure, consideration of ICC supervision of resupply flights was at this time premature.



5. The Polish members of the ICC might use the Commission's resupply flights as a means of gathering intelligence for the Pathet Lao.

US officials in Laos were likewise critical of the ICC report and submitted their comments to Washington. [REDACTED] the report did not make clear how the determination of "isolated garrisons" in "hostile territory" could be made. Militarily [REDACTED] the acceptance of the halting of aerial resupply would solve the enemy's most perplexing problem, while leaving unsolved the greatest US problem: how to check the enemy's steady encroachments on the ground. Moreover, the halting of flights over "hostile" territory would halt all US aerial support in Laos, inasmuch as every air route passed over some enemy guerrillas or patrols.

[REDACTED] the major US advantages--more suitable aircraft and more internal airfields--would be nullified by the ICC proposals, and the Meos, if termed by the ICC as "'cut off in areas generally controlled by [a] militarily hostile party,'" would be confronted by the bitter alternatives of surrender, extermination, or migration.

The US Ambassador to Laos, the Military Attache, and CHMAAG concurred [REDACTED] the Ambassador added, however, his belief that the ICC overestimated the dangerous character of overflights, and his warning that the US should not accept piecemeal arms control measures that hampered exactly those US actions that the enemy wished to prevent.

(These comments [REDACTED] were originally transmitted [REDACTED] to the JCS on 23 May. The retransmittals do not, however, specify the date of original transmission.)

23 May

Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman delivered the Thai delegation's first presentation to the Geneva Conference. Noting at the start the uncertainty and fragility of the peace in Laos, Thanat urged that the ICC redouble its efforts to achieve a complete cessation of hostilities in Laos, in order that the Geneva Conference could begin to perform a positive and useful task.

Thanat criticized the seating of rebel Lao elements at the Conference, averring that this action had in effect confirmed a de facto division of the country and had therefore caused the RLG to absent itself from the Conference. Thanat considered it appropriate, the RLG being absent and some political parties being present, that representatives of all legal Laotian political parties be seated by the Conference.

Thanat also defended the status of Laos as a SEATO protocol state, urged the strengthening and broadening of the ICC, and declared for a Conference-guaranteed, rather than a Lao-declared, neutrality, since the threat to that neutrality came from without rather than within.



Finally, Thanat expressed his belief that all the nations of Southeast Asia whose interests and security were affected by Laotian developments should be invited to the Conference, and restated his proposal that Indonesia and Malaya, as well as other Southeast Asian nations, be invited.

Consul General Martin reported from Geneva on the same day that Thanat, following his speech, had presented to the co-Chairmen a formal request for two Conference seats for Laotian political parties supporting the RLG, these seats to be occupied in rotation by the parties' representatives. By the Thai plan, the RLG seat would remain vacant until the RLG chose to be seated. Thanat intended to make a "very forceful pitch," Martin continued, and to give the impression that the Thai delegation might leave the Conference, if the seating issue were not satisfactorily resolved. Indeed, Martin thought, it was not impossible that Thanat would carry out this threat.

Ambassador Harriman had told Thanat, Martin said, that the US would support the Thais on this issue, and on the issue of inviting additional Southeast Asian nations. However, Harriman had declared, the Conference should not be allowed to founder on the seating dispute. Rather, if the Conference were to fail, it should do so over some important substantive issue, such as a Soviet demand for a veto over control machinery.

(Consul General Martin believed that Thanat had been impressed by this counsel of moderation, and Thanat's actions of the following day bore out this judgment. The Soviet presiding officer, Pushkin, termed the seating controversy "not a 'continuing question,' but rather one that had been settled before the Conference began; and Thanat in reply merely reserved the right to raise the seating question again during the Conference.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 30, 23 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 34, 23 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 41, 24 May 61.

24 May

The Geneva co-Chairmen, the UK and USSR, had failed to agree upon new instructions to the ICC (see item 20 May), Ambassador Harriman reported to the Secretary of State.

The UK had submitted to the USSR a draft of instructions stating the co-Chairmen's belief that "wherever the Commission have grounds for believing that there might have been a substantial infringement of the cease-fire they should investigate the incident on the spot immediately." By the British draft, moreover, the co-Chairmen would have urged that a detailed cease-fire agreement be undertaken immediately, with the ICC doing "everything in its power" to bring this about. The UK instruction would have requested that all parties issue instructions to their troops to observe a "military stand-still," as well as a "cease-fire"; finally, all parties would have been asked to report to the ICC the exact locations of all their troops.

The UK draft was fully supported by the US and France. The USSR, however, rejected it as "unnecessary." The Soviet representative produced, after some prodding, an innocuous alternative draft that added no new instructions, expressing only "hope" that there would be no repetition of the

misunderstandings that had arisen during the cease-fire. Under questioning, he admitted it was the Soviet view that the ICC was powerless to investigate complaints without the express consent of both parties.

The British and the French considered this Soviet uncooperativeness to be "basic and serious," for both considered a verifiable cease-fire to be an absolute prerequisite to the Conference and both held that the ICC must be subject to instructions from the co-Chairmen (and later, the Conference) in order to control such a cease-fire. Here, then, was an "issue of substantive importance on which [a] firm stand must be taken."

The three Western allies therefore agreed to the following procedures:

1. The UK representative would remind the Soviet representative that the ICC had asked for instructions, and would insist that instructions must be sent.

2. If the USSR remained adamant, the UK representative would point to the UK-USSR pre-conference agreement (see item 19 April) and state that the matter would be referred to the British Government for instructions. He would also speculate that, the ICC's request for instructions having been received, the other delegations would require an explanation of the co-Chairmen's failure to act, and would serve notice that he would have to bring the matter to Conference debate by 29 May.

3. If the debate failed to induce Soviet co-operation, the UK would suggest suspension of the Conference until an agreement had been reached on instructions to the ICC.

On the following day, this course of action was inaugurated. The UK representative presented to the Soviet representative the arguments of 1. above, but the Soviet remained unmoved. The UK, therefore, released to the press a statement that no agreement had been reached on instructions to the ICC and that the matter had been referred to the British Government.

(TS) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 42 and 43, 24 May 61; CONFE 50, 25 May 61.

24 May

CINCPAC stated to CHMAAG Laos the necessity for regrouping and retraining the FAL if, as he assumed, the US planned to provide the support that would enable the FAL to continue to fight the Pathet Lao.

CINCPAC noted the differences in the training systems of the PL and the FAL: the PL concentrated on leadership and troop indoctrination while the US training of the FAL stressed unit training and "hoped for better leadership." Consequently, "when the PL/KL [Pathet Lao-Kong Le] cause was at its lowest

ebb in Dec 61 and Jan 61, the communists did not talk defeat or cease-fire or ICC intercession. They talked ultimate victory." "We must," CINCPAC urged, "learn a lesson from this." CINCPAC presented the following observations on future US actions in Laos:

1. "Phoumi needs to get the habit of being a field commander."
2. Although guerrilla tactics remained an element in the struggle in Laos, standard infantry tactics had also been developed. A lack of coordinated firepower, not necessarily detrimental to guerrilla warfare, handicapped standard infantry units. It was necessary, therefore, that US advisers plan and direct FAL artillery, artillery observation and air strike interdiction at the tactical unit level.
3. Troop indoctrination would be essential to the creation of motivation and fighting spirit.
4. Civic action, as well as the support functions (communications, supply, logistics, and maintenance), would continue to be an important element.
5. "Confidence in the outcome must be displayed at all levels."

Regarding the "regrouping and retraining problem," CINCPAC observed that the plan for training FAL battalions in Thailand was "part of the solution." However, CINCPAC also suggested "special consideration" for the following additional proposals:

1. The establishment of a "special processing system" to reorganize and retrain units that had spent prolonged periods in combat.
  2. Initiation of instruction in leadership for FAL NCOs and officers.
  3. Conduct of a logistics survey to determine, during the cease-fire period, the exact status of supplies and equipment in Laos.
  4. Emphasis upon marksmanship in the training of FAL troops.
- (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 116119, 25 May 61.

24 May

The Consul General in Geneva reported to the Secretary of State 27 violations of the cease-fire in Laos during the period 13-23 May, as reported by "reliable sources." These violations consisted of sporadic shelling of FAL positions, ambushes of isolated FAL detachments, and a few probing attacks against FAL forces.

A primary target of the PL appeared to be the stronghold of the Meo guerrilla forces at Ban Padong which was reportedly shelled on all but three days of the period. PL forces were reported to have made probing attacks on Ban Padong on the 18th, 21st, and 22d.

(OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 36, 24 May 61.

25 May

The British Ambassador to the US, during a call upon the Secretary of State, delivered on behalf of his government an aide memoire dealing with contingency planning in Southeast Asia. The aide memoire stated that, as a result of the Laotian cease-fire and the convening of the Geneva Conference, the "possible requirement for a military intervention or military preparation" had become "entirely different." The British Government, however, "had in mind" the following two contingencies: 1) that there might come a time during the negotiations when there would be an advantage in SEATO's "making some preliminary moves and letting these be known"; and 2) that the Conference might collapse with the resultant "serious resumption of hostilities" in Laos.

At present, the aide memoire continued, the UK was making no military preparations of any kind, "apart from some discussions between General Hull and Admiral Felt about fueling arrangements in Thailand." Since it appeared that no existing plans covered the two contingencies outlined by the British Government, it was considered "useful to know the views of the United States Administration on this subject."

The aide memoire also expressed the British Government's preference for bilateral rather than SEATO talks and suggested that these conversations be conducted, "without commitment to action by governments," by General Hull and Admiral Felt. It would, however, first be "essential for our two governments to agree upon terms of reference to be given the military planners."

(TS) UK Aide Memoire, "Contingency Planning in Southeast Asia," 25 May 61; OCJCS Files, 091 Laos (3).

25 May Ambassador Brown cabled to the Secretary of State the proposed RLG reply to ICC Chairman Sen's letter of 21 May (see item). The RLG draft reaffirmed the reissue of orders to RLG forces to cease fire and recapitulated the Pathet Lao cease-fire violations. However, the letter stated that ICC control of supply flights "could not be considered" in the absence of effective control of supply to the Pathet Lao; the letter also stated, with regard to halting flights not controlled by the ICC over hostile territory, that the RLG objected to the presupposition that there were areas exclusively controlled by the enemy. The draft reply concluded by agreeing to the proposal that the Ban Namone conferees discuss cease-fire violations, and the "fundamental necessity" of an early agreement on the details of the cease-fire.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2144, 25 May 61.

25 May CINCPAC, expressing the expectation that Communist attacks against Ban Padong would be intensified, emphasized to CHMAAG that continued FAL presence in that area was essential in order to validate the FAL claims to control within Xieng Khouang province. CINCPAC noted that "the right of self defense has never been precluded by cease fire arrangements to which [the] FAL is party," and inquired whether and to what extent CHMAAG and Phoumi had planned for the defense of Ban Padong. CINCPAC asked, particularly:

1. Had arrangements been made to airlift artillery and mortars to Ban Padong?

2. Had T-6 strikes been planned against the enemy personnel and materiel concentrations?

3. Were the ammunition and food stocks at Ban Padong sufficient to allow temporary loss of the helicopter strips? (See item 27 May.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 252310Z May 61.

26 May Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that ICC Chairman Sen had on the previous day delivered letters from Souvanna to Boun Oum and King Savang. Souvanna had invited Boun Oum to meet him at Ban Namone and had urged King Savang to head a coalition government. Boun Oum had already refused the invitation; the King had received the letter and had commented to Phoumi that he alone designated the head of government, that Souvanna should come to Luang Prabang "like any loyal Lao" if he had any suggestions or requests, and that the ICC Chairman should not act as a "mailman." The King concluded, characteristically, by refusing to "lower himself into [the] political arena."

Brown also reported that, on 23 May, Sihanouk had requested Boun Oum's aid "to save Geneva Conference," and Boun Oum had decided to leave shortly for Geneva. Brown considered that the principal purpose for Boun Oum's journey was to maintain the friendship and support of Sihanouk.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2148, 26 May 61.

26 May Ambassador Brown confirmed for the Secretary of State the Australian allegation that ICC Chairman Sen was, by his

activities in internal Laotian politics (see item 22 May), exceeding his mandate to verify a cease-fire. Brown cited several instances of Sen's intruding into Laotian politics, noting that Sen had from the outset stressed the importance of the formation of a coalition government.

To Brown it appeared that Sen was attempting to lessen US opposition to a coalition and to persuade the US to "accept Souvanna." In addition, Brown continued, it was almost certain that Sen was imparting to all factions the impression that he considered them co-equals with one another. In this respect, Sen's activities were probably giving to the Souvanna group and the Pathet Lao some encouragement that a political solution favorable to them would be found.

Chairman Sen had, however, emphasized the importance of an effective cease-fire and it was the ICC that had prodded the Pathet Lao into agreeing to discuss the cease-fire at Ban Namone. Moreover, Sen had been surprisingly willing to have the ICC go to Ban Padong, despite the lack of agreement among the parties regarding the status of actions at that site.

Brown considered that even if the ICC were enjoined from engaging in internal Laotian political maneuvers, the Indian members would find pretexts for pursuing their objectives. The Ambassador concluded that Sen had on balance been more helpful than harmful and that it would not in any event be propitious to call the ICC to task at this juncture.

In a message the following day, Brown reported that Sen had, in a conversation with the Ambassador, stated the conviction that no amount of international control machinery would ever wholly solve the Laotian problem or dispel outside influences. Although recognizing that international accord and control could lessen the outside influences, Sen believed that twenty armed divisions and the complete negation of Laotian national sovereignty would be required to achieve "really effective supervision and control."

Modifying his view that Sen was equating the three factions in Laos (see above), Brown also reported that Sen actually discounted the RLG equality considerably, because of the RLG's lack of popular support. The RLG's constitutionality did not impress Sen (nor did it impress UK Ambassador Addis, Brown noted) because the RLG had come to power essentially by force, with only pro forma compliance with constitutional procedures.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2155, 26 May 61;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2163, 27 May 61.

26 May

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, according to the press and members of the RLG negotiating team, agreement had been reached at Ban Namone on the principle of immediate formation of a subcommittee to deal with military matters. Among its other duties, the subcommittee would work with the ICC.

According to the Ambassador, the RLG was pleased by this development because it established the "principle of concurrent military and political committees."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2156, 26 May 61.

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27 May

In a joint message, [REDACTED] authorized, subject to Country Team approval, the arming of ten additional Meo auto-defense teams. This US governmental action reversed an earlier decision, transmitted to Ambassador Brown on 9 May (see item), not to arm additional Meo.

In a return message the Country Team stated its approval of the arming of the Meo. Also, the Team suggested that if the Meo were ever confronted with the alternatives of extermination or evacuation, they could be resettled in the Annamite mountain chain of eastern Laos. In this area, the Meo would act as an "effective screen against Viet Minh probes, infiltration and subversion against both Laos and [South Viet Nam]."

[REDACTED]

27 May

The Chairman of ICC Laos reported to the Geneva co-Chairmen on the ICC's activities from 21 May to date (see item 20 May for the previous ICC report).

The situation in Laos had remained generally unchanged, the Chairman reported. On 26 May (see item), however, the parties at Ban Namone had agreed to the simultaneous discussion of political and military problems and to the establishment of a machinery for examining in detail the military solution and for determining the specific tasks which the parties might wish the ICC to perform with respect to the cease-fire.

The Chairman also reported that he had addressed identical letters to Boun Oum, Souvanna and Souphanouvong (see items 20 and 21 May) and had continued "to establish contacts" at the highest level. Both sides had continued to complain of opposition build-ups, provocations, and cease-fire violations. Meanwhile, the ICC had continued, in cooperation with the Laotian factions, to plan visits to sensitive areas along the cease-fire line (see item 21 May).

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 83, 30 May 61.

27 May

CHMAAG, responding to CINCPAC's queries concerning the defense of Ban Padong (see item 25 May), termed that area a "guerrilla redoubt," supported operationally and logistically [REDACTED]. The MAAG had supplied assistance [REDACTED] but had not, [REDACTED] planned with Phoumi the defense of Ban Padong. Two hundred and fifty-five troops had been the extent of FAL reinforcements for Ban Padong, and the FAL had stated that no further troops were available.

Included in the assistance that MAAG had rendered was the air movement of two 75 mm. pack howitzers to Ban Padong. Also, the movement of two additional guns with crews and of additional mortars and crews was underway.

T-6 strikes had been planned and flown against the Communist attackers, CHMAAG continued, and the MAAG had cooperated "by expediting requests" passed to it.

CHMAAG stated that there had been no reported shortages of food or ammunition at Ban Padong. The Meo



commander had been advised to prepare alternate helicopter landing zones in the event that the currently employed strips were interdicted by enemy fire. Interruption of helicopter support would force complete reliance upon air drops for resupply, CHMAAG reported; further, enemy encirclement of Ban Padong and the introduction of anti-aircraft artillery would halt aerial resupply altogether.

CHMAAG believed that a determined conventional defense of Ban Padong was beyond the capability of the basically irregular forces there. Unless offensive guerrilla operations were resumed in Xieng Khouang province the PL could concentrate upon and achieve, after a "respectable fight" by the defenders, the reduction of the stronghold.

Future courses of action had been discussed with [REDACTED] CHMAAG went on to say, and it had been agreed that if Ban Padong were lost, guerrilla operations in the area would still be feasible. Small Meo bands operating from mobile bases could re-establish a guerrilla complex while being resupplied by air. The approximately 800 Meo effectives at Ban Padong were but a small part of the total Meo guerrilla strength of some 6,000 around the Plaine des Jarres, CHMAAG pointed out.

On the same day, CINCPAC acknowledged CHMAAG's report, expressing pleasure [REDACTED] at MAAG's close coordination with and support [REDACTED] CINCPAC suggested that CHMAAG continue to apply pressure upon Phoumi to provide additional reinforcements for Ban Padong.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 116915, 27 May 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 272231Z May 61.

28 May

CINCPAC, noting the continued use of T-6's against the PL forces attacking Ban Padong, raised with CHMAAG the sensitive question whether T-6 operations of this kind were legitimate defensive actions as provided by the terms of the cease-fire. CINCPAC stated his opinion that the responsible commander was best able to judge what actions were necessary for the security of his forces. Nonetheless CINCPAC enjoined CHMAAG to discuss T-6 operations with Phoumi, reemphasizing that the blame for violating the cease-fire must fall on the Communists (see item 30 May).

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 280546Z, May 61.

29 May

Consul General Martin reported from Geneva to the Secretary of State that the ICC report of its technical requirements (see item 19 May) had been received.

Military representatives of the Allied delegations had agreed that the report's requirements were valid and had decided during preliminary discussions of the report that first priority should be given to supplying the following:

- 5 light aircraft
- 6 helicopters
- 1 C-47
- 19 radios, long- and medium-range
- 30 jeeps
- 6 trucks

Soviet co-Chairman Pushkin, reported the Consul General, had refused to discuss these ICC requirements in plenary session. In a meeting with the British co-Chairman, Pushkin had insisted that the co-Chairmen handle the immediate requirements of the ICC. Further, Pushkin had insisted that, when the Conference reconvened, consideration must turn to such substantive matters as control machinery. He had continued to be firmly opposed to discussing the cease-fire, instructions to the ICC, and Laotian representation.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 75, 29 May 61;  
(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 76, 29 May 61.

29 May The JCS supplied to CINCPAC "draft terms of reference" for his imminent conversations with UK military officials regarding the contemplated intervention in Laos (see item 6-7 June). These terms of reference were substantially identical in both concept and language to those contained in the joint State-Defense draft plan for possible intervention in Laos, commented on by the JCS on 9 May (see item).

These terms had been handed to the British Ambassador in Washington by the Department of State, with the preambulatory statement that the "initial judgment" of the US was that the existing SEATO plan 5 was the proper vehicle "for the contemplated action," although the force strengths and operating aspects of the Plan should be reviewed in the light of the existing situation. Therefore, the terms of reference specifically requested of the conferees an updating of the estimates of enemy capabilities (see item 2 June for the amendment of these terms of reference).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996704, 29 May 61.

29 May Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to newsmen and RLG delegates to the Ban Namone parley, agreement had finally been reached on the agenda for separate political and military committee discussions.

It was agreed that political discussions would cover the following points--all related to the formation of a coalition government: 1) provisional nature of the new government; 2) procedure for its formation; 3) its composition; 4) its duties; and 5) its policies.

The military agenda comprised the following items: 1) cease-fire, 2) composition of mixed cease-fire teams; 3) role of the ICC; and 4) questions relating to liaison between the ICC and the joint military subcommittee.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2166, 29 May 61.

30 May The US Ambassadors to Laos and Thailand presented, in accordance with a request by Ambassador Harriman, their recommendations for US policy at the Geneva Conference.

The Ambassadors strongly supported the US delegation at Geneva in its "pressing hard now" for an effective cease-fire and strong instructions to the ICC. These steps were necessary, the Ambassadors said, to deter a many-pronged PL/Viet Minh advance. In addition, at least a dozen ICC field teams were necessary in Laos because they would probably cause the Communist advisers

and cadres to hide or withdraw. The US must, moreover, insist that the cease-fire and control machinery disputes be solved at Geneva before the Conference considered any political problems.

Ambassadors Young and Brown did not consider that the Communist charges that strong control machinery would infringe Laotian sovereignty should deter the US from insisting upon these strong controls as a means to get the Viet Minh out of Laos. Phoumi favored strong controls, the Ambassadors continued, and had given no indication of any substantial "local objection."

With regard to the Communist argument that channeling economic aid through an international control body would be incompatible with Laotian sovereignty, the Ambassadors pointed out that, in the present circumstances, Laos had only two choices: true neutrality and some loss of sovereignty; or Communist alignment and total loss of sovereignty. Unless there was some sort of international cost-sharing mechanism, the US, under the alternative government-to-government aid scheme, would be the unlucky and sole source, as at present, of the cash grants essential for direct maintenance.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 67 (to Vientiane, 85), 28 May 61; Vientiane to SecState, 2169 (to Geneva, 106), 30 May 61.

30 May Consul General Martin reported that he had made clear to British co-Chairman MacDonald the US position that a plenary conference session to discuss the cease-fire and instructions to the ICC "must not be delayed beyond tomorrow [31 May]."

The French delegate supported this US position and said that, if the "meeting would not take place," at least the French, British and US positions should be made clear to the press.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 81, 30 May 61.

30-31 May CHMAAG Laos replied to CINCPAC's query concerning the use of T-6s (see item 28 May). CHMAAG reported that the only T-6 missions flown since the cease-fire had been those specifically requested by the Meo Commander, Vang Pao, and that these missions had been considered defensive in nature. CHMAAG also considered that the missions had bolstered greatly the morale of Vang Pao and his Meo forces.

CHMAAG reported that, although every effort was made to have Phoumi or Laotian Air Force personnel consult with the MAAG prior to launching such strikes, this consultation did not normally occur. In reality, however, CHMAAG continued, US personnel knew of such missions inasmuch as the US assisted the FAL in the arming of the planes and in target selection.

CHMAAG also quoted for CINCPAC's information the views of Ambassador Brown on the current uses of the T-6s:

In view continued and increasing artillery barrage in violation cease-fire and importance maintenance Meo morale, I have not . . . objected despite obvious adverse propaganda

effect. No . . . bombs will be used.

On the same day, the JCS, in a message to CINCPAC, authorized the use of T-6s against enemy forces in the Ban Padong area as long as cease-fire violations by the enemy continued in that area. The JCS stipulated, however, that "Washington clearance" would be required for either the use of T-6s elsewhere in Laos or the use of bombs. CINCPAC on the following day requested in regard to these required "Washington clearances" that CHMAAG report the extent to which CHMAAG could control the Laotian Air Force.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996759, 30 May 61; (S) Msg Vientiane to SecState, 2158, 27 May 61; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 117510, 31 May 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 312151Z May 61.

31 May Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of the proceedings at Ban Namone as reported by newsmen and members of the RLG delegation.

In the political committee, the Souvanna and PL delegates had presented their views of the policies a coalition government should follow. Souvanna's delegate called for: 1) enactment of laws that would not keep any political faction at a disadvantage; 2) the holding of general elections for the purpose of forming a new government conforming to the popular will; 3) the acceptance of aid from all countries without strings; and 4) no foreign military bases or alliances.

The PL delegate called for: 1) general elections governed by the 1957 electoral law; 2) unification of the armed forces of all political factions; 3) no foreign military bases except Sano; 4) refusal of SEATO protection; 5) withdrawal of all foreign troops; and 6) repeal of international agreements contravening the concept of neutrality.

In the military subcommittee, the PL delegation proposed the following ground rules for the cease-fire, all directed at the "Savannakhet group": 1) RLG aircraft should not violate territory held by the PL or Souvanna forces; 2) the FAL should withdraw seven kilometers from important points; and 3) the FAL should not make any arrests or conduct any sweep operations. The RLG group agreed to "consider" the PL proposals.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2176, 31 May 61.

31 May Consul General Martin reported to the Secretary of State on the 31 May meeting of the Geneva Conference which took up the questions of technical requirements of the ICC (see item 29 May) and a reply to the ICC request for instructions (see items 20, 29 May).

MacDonald stated the British position to be that, in view of many complaints that cease-fire violations were continuing, further instructions to the ICC were needed, as well as a request to the opposing parties to cooperate with the ICC. MacDonald made clear that the instructions to the ICC would cover only the immediate military situation, without prejudice to "delegation" discussions or decisions on international control machinery.

Ambassador Harriman, speaking for the US, urged the delegates to support the British position and restated the US position on the cease-fire (see item 17 May) and the need for instructions to the ICC (see item 24 May). The French and Thai delegates supported the position taken by the US and Britain.

The Soviet delegate dismissed the cease-fire issue as academic, having been settled when the conference opened on the basis of the ICC report verifying the existence of the cease-fire (see item 11 May). Citing the ICC report of 27 May (see item), the Soviet delegate argued that isolated incidents had been exaggerated in order to evade the main issue before the conference. The Pathet Lao and Souvanna delegates supported the Soviet position.

(OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 99, 1 June 61.

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,  
FOURTH INSTALLMENT: 1 JUNE TO 31 DECEMBER 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION  
JOINT SECRETARIAT  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
25 JUNE 1962

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1 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Saigon warned the Secretary of State that assignment to France of the responsibility for training and supplying the FAL "would not be conducive to good relations between Viet Nam and Laos and would further weaken GVN confidence in Free World resolution and ability to preserve Laos from Communism." No matter who was Prime Minister of the Lao coalition government, the Ambassador continued, the GVN would remain convinced that France intended, eventually to use its role to bring Souvanna to power and that under Souvanna the kingdom would become a Communist state. Ambassador Nolting, who shared the opinions of the GVN regarding the French and Souvanna, recommended that the US, another SEATO member other than France or a "reasonably firm neutral such as Malaya" be made responsible for the future training of the Lao Army (see item 3 June 1961).

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(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1826, 1 Jun 61.

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2 Jun 61 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS expressed their "grave concern" about the "serious deficiencies" in military intelligence in Southeast Asia. The Trapnell Report (see item 31 March 1961) had already emphasized the effect that lack of intelligence had upon the operations of the FAL in Laos. And, the JCS believed, the steady deterioration of the situation in Southeast Asia, the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention and the consequently increased likelihood of US contingency operation made it imperative that the "full national intelligence collection potential in the area be brought to bear."

In an attachment to their memorandum, the JCS listed numerous intelligence requirements on Communist China, North Viet Nam, and Laos. In the case of Laos, the Chiefs listed as "priority" needs the following:

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The military services had already increased their collection operations in Southeast Asia, [REDACTED]

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Consequently, on 19 June, the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Special Operations), General Graves B. Erskine, informed the Chairman, USIB, Mr. Allen Dulles, of the "grave concern" felt in the Department of Defense about these deficiencies. General Erskine stated that the seriousness of the problem clearly required "most careful attention" in USIB, (see items 3 and 15 August 1961).

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(TS) JCSM-373-61 to SecDef, 2 June 61, derived from JCS 1992/996, 23 May 61; (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/996, 21 June 61; (TS) 2nd N/H of JCS 1992/996, 27 June 61; all in JMF 9150/2010 (27 Apr 61).

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2, 7  
Jun 61

In response to a question from CINCPAC (see item 30-31 May 1961) CHMAAG Laos stated that he had "little or no control" over T-6 missions flown by the Lao Air Force. CHMAAG controlled only the use of bombs; he would, however, continue to urge the FAL at least to consult the MAAG before dispatching missions.

On 7 June, CHMAAG reported further to CINCPAC that he had on several occasions discussed the use of T-6s with Phoumi. CHMAAG had at these times pointed out that such missions gave considerable propaganda advantage to the enemy while returning only minor military advantage to the RLG. However, CHMAAG continued, Phoumi regarded the T-6s an effective weapon and had in fact relaxed his personal control over their operations. CHMAAG had ordered all MAAG elements to report immediately to him any indication that a T-6 strike was imminent. (See item 24 August 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 118377, 2 Jun 61, DA IN 119790, 7 Jun 61.

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2 Jun 61 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC revised terms of reference for his upcoming conversation with UK military officials regarding intervention in Laos (see items 9 and 29 May 1961). The terms had been revised, by agreement between UK Embassy officials and the Department of State, principally as follows:

1. To the circumstances for intervention was added the proviso that the two governments would have agreed that "clear failure to reach an effectively controlled cease-fire" existed or that "a breaking of the cease-fire by the Communists, accompanied by a resumption of offensive action" had occurred.

2. The political objectives of the intervention became to: a) prevent Laos being completely overrun by the Communists and to keep a RLG in being on Laotian soil; b) protect Thailand while building up a position of strength in that country; and c) establish an effectively controlled cease-fire in order to permit "the achievement by negotiation of a unified, independent and neutral Laos." (See items 17 and 22 June 1961)

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996974, 2 Jun 61.

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3 Jun 61 Ambassador Brown, reporting from Vientiane, informed the Secretary of State that, although the US was not in a "position of superiority," there nevertheless were "forces" operating in its favor. The Ambassador therefore concluded that there might be no "serious disadvantage" in "waiting it out" at Geneva.

Among the "forces" mentioned by Ambassador Brown were:

1) food shortages among Pathet Lao units; 2) friction between Kong Le and PL contingents; 3) the opposition of the King, who enjoyed a certain popular respect, to undue concessions to the Communists; 4) an increasing firmness on the part of the RLG; 5) the probable inability of the Viet Minh to assist the Pathet Lao if the ICC were sufficiently strengthened; and 6) the

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renewed unity of the Western Allies, together with the rallying of world opinion behind the US position.

The Ambassador, however, added that the enemy now enjoyed a "fundamental military advantage" and warned of "formidable difficulties" which the US would face now and in the future.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2159, 3 Jun 61.

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3 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Bangkok, in a message for the Secretary of State, recommended against "seizing on the maintenance and enhancement of the French presence in Laos as a way of salvaging the Western position in Laos." The Thai Government, the Ambassador reported, blamed the French Military Mission for the inability of the FAL to use the equipment provided it by the US. Thailand also objected to France's refusal to recognize the Boun Oum government; moreover, the Thai Government suspected that French intelligence agents had supported the Kong Le revolt. The US Ambassador then warned that US support of the continued French military presence in Laos would not improve the Western position in Laos and would be interpreted by the Thai Government as "a very thin veil for the process of US disengagement in Laos."

(See item 8-10 June 1961.)

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(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2184, 3 Jun 61.

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3 Jun 61 The JCS, acting at the request of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), provided the Secretary of Defense with their estimate of the feasibility of a "Mekong River Patrol." The JCS supported the concept that such a patrol along the Laos-Thailand border should be considered as an offset to the increased Communist threat to Thailand and South Viet Nam that

divided

divided or leftist oriented or controlled Laos would present. But, they went on to say, even a "significant commitment" of personnel and equipment could not be expected to provide a "completely effective barrier" against Communist infiltration; however, a patrol could limit Communist infiltration and insurgency operations in Thailand.

Thailand already possessed ample resources for counter-infiltration purposes including, the JCS said, the resources necessary for a "routine type of border patrol along the Mekong River which could attain remunerative results without commitment of a disproportionate degree of resources." Small mobile, highly-trained Thai units, placed at strategic locations along the river, provided with helicopters, and light aircraft support, and supplemented by an "austere" sampan/junk river patrol, should be created as part of the routine military activities of the RTA. No "substantial additional resources" would be necessary, except perhaps some US aid in obtaining the proper river craft.

The JCS raised objections to the patrol as a SEATO venture. Action through SEATO would, the JCS considered, give the appearance that the US was making the Mekong the main line of defense in Southeast Asia and was therefore, by implication, willing to give up Laos. Further, SEATO's approval for such an undertaking seemed "remote" in view of its failure to undertake any "positive action" during the present Laotian crisis.

A "Mekong River Patrol," the JCS concluded, should not be considered "in isolation"; rather, it should be viewed as part of, and in conjunction with, "over-all actions in support of Thailand and South Vietnam."

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(TS) JCSM-372-61 to SecDef, 3 Jun 61, derived from JCS 1992/998, 25 May 61; (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 12 May 61, encl to JCS 1992/992, 16 May 61; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (12 May 61) (1).

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3 Jun 61 In a message to the Department of State, Secretary Rusk reported on the highlights of President Kennedy's 2 June Paris conversation with President de Gaulle.

The French President, in reviewing previous discussions on Laos, reiterated his understanding of US commitments in the area, and agreed with President Kennedy that the situation on the ground was "bad." If, said de Gaulle, the honor of the US would force it to intervene in Laos, the French would not oppose this decision but, on the other hand, the French would not intervene. Referring to the Geneva Conference on Laos, de Gaulle expressed the opinion that the "least bad possibility" would be a return to the 1954 agreements.

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(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 9, 3 Jun 61.

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Jun 61

Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State that President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, during their two-day discussions at Vienna of world problems, had mentioned various aspects of the Laotian crisis, among them the need to define "neutral" and "independent," the role of the ICC, and the strategic importance of Laos.

1. The need to define "neutral" and "independent."

During the first day's conversation, the President noted that the US shared SEATO commitments toward Laos, while Communist North Viet Nam was supplying arms and men to the Pathet Lao. The problem was to find a solution to the crisis that would not involve the prestige of either the US, the organizer of SEATO, or the USSR, the champion of world Communism. To find such a solution, as opposed to a settlement imposed by the foreign-sponsored Pathet Lao on the people of Laos, it would first be necessary to define "neutral" and "independent," the

adjectives



adjectives used to describe the future government of Laos.

Premier Khrushchev agreed to the need for such definitions, citing Burma and Cambodia as examples of independent, neutral states. He objected, however, to President Kennedy's implication that the Pathet Lao sought to impose its will on the Laotian people, observing that no guerrilla movement could succeed without popular support. Returning to the need for definitions, the Soviet Head of State charged that the US recognized as neutral only those nations that accepted its leadership.

President Kennedy responded by stating that Burma, India, and Yugoslavia fitted the US definitions of "neutral" and "independent." He added that infringements on independence and neutrality occurred in nations, such as Poland, which were of strategic importance to the USSR.

2. The role of the ICC. Regarding this subject, which was discussed on both days, Premier Khrushchev declared that, though he desired to have the Lao Government establish ICC control over the kingdom, he would not agree to the Commission's becoming a "supra-government." The existing ICC, which could act upon the agreement of two member nations, did not, according to the Soviets, infringe upon Laotian sovereignty.

President Kennedy replied that the ICC would not be a government, but rather an agency to investigate alleged violations of the cease-fire. The President then proposed that the US and Soviet Union should use their influence to induce the Laotian factions to support the ICC and to grant it access to the entire kingdom. Although the Soviet Premier expressed agreement, he indicated that the first task facing the US and USSR was to obtain support from all three factions for a neutral government. This, in Mr. Khrushchev's opinion, was

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the basic question, one that should be solved before turning to the problem of the ICC.

3. The strategic importance of Laos. On the second day, the two Heads of State elaborated on their previous statements that Laos was of "no strategic importance." Mr. Khrushchev assured the President that the Soviet Union had no vested interest in this remote kingdom and that the USSR had merely extended its help at the request of Souvanna, who had charged that his government was overthrown by US-supported forces. Neither the US nor Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev continued, should "get involved," but the USSR could not accept the US "pretension to special rights" in Laos. Nevertheless, because the prestige of both nations was involved, the US and the Soviet Union would have to exercise restraint.

President Kennedy responded by noting that the existing US commitments to Laos, which he wished to reduce, had been undertaken prior to the current crisis and that the present American effort was directed at stabilizing the situation. No reduction of US commitments could begin, however, until an effective cease-fire was in force and a truly neutral government had subsequently been established. The President then stated that situations "involving reaction and counteractions," such as a competitive build-up of forces, would endanger the peace and should be avoided.

At the close of the meeting, President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev issued a joint communique which stated that they had "reaffirmed their support of a neutral and independent Laos under a government chosen by the Laotians themselves, and of international agreements for insuring the country's neutrality and independence; in this connection they have recognized the importance of an effective cease-fire."

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(On 7 June, in a circular message to all diplomatic posts, the Secretary of State commented upon the Vienna communique. He pointed out that, while the statements committed the Soviet Union publicly, the terms of the communique neither guaranteed a change in Soviet policy nor insured that Soviet influence with the Pathet Lao would be used energetically to bring about a genuine cease-fire. The US, he continued, was closely watching Soviet and Pathet Lao actions and would shape its policy and operations in the light of developments in Laos.)

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(S) Msgs, Vienna to SecState, SECTO 16, 4 Jun 61; Paris to SecState, SECTO 25, 5 Jun 61; (C) Msg, Dept of State Circular 1972, 7 Jun 61; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 22, 5 Jun 61; (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLIV, 26 Jun 61, p. 999.

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5 Jun 61 CINCPAC transmitted to the JCS a CHMAAG Laos report that attributed FAL reverses "almost entirely to lack of training." The French trainers, CHMAAG had said, had been completely ineffective in tactical training and had, in some fields, such as logistics, made no attempt to instruct but had performed the functions themselves. Consequently, when the French had withdrawn their advice, a void had resulted. The US training effort, limited at first to technical training, had not yet had sufficient time to remedy the FAL deficiencies (see item 10 June 1961).

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 051958Z Jun 61.

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6 Jun 61

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7 Jun 61 After two days of artillery bombardment, Ban Padong, Meo redoubt on the southwest rim of the Plaine des Jarres, fell to the Pathet Lao. The Meo evacuated, "in surprisingly good order," to a new position seven miles to the southwest.

(On the following day, in response to an urgent request from Ambassador Harriman, Ambassador Brown forwarded to Geneva a MAAG estimate of the significance of this setback. The Meo had attempted a conventional defense of Ban Padong, the MAAG said, because of the prestige which both the RLG and Vang Pao, the Meo commander, attached to holding that site, and because of the need to defend the large Meo refugee camp nearby. If the refugee camp could be relocated, there would be no reason why the Meo could not resume their original guerrilla tactics and, in fact, improve their effectiveness.

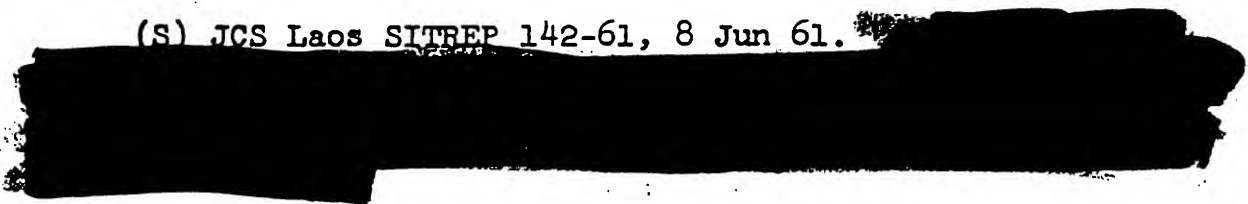
The PL would need 7-10 days to prepare an attack upon the new Meo position, the MAAG estimated; whereas the Meo who, despite the defeat, were still loyal to Vang Pao and willing to fight, could be completely redeployed and ready for conventional or unconventional defense in 5-7 days. The MAAG

would

would advise Vang Pao against holding future positions too long - and the MAAG observer at Ban Padong thought the Meo leader would "think twice" before attempting a conventional defense again. Rather, the MAAG would advise harassing tactics; having successfully evacuated Ban Padong, the Meo could in future actions "fall back and evade" without further disintegration.) (See item 22 June 1961.)

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(S) JCS Laos SITREP 142-61, 8 Jun 61.



7 Jun 61 The Secretary of State instructed the US Ambassador in Moscow to "seek the earliest appointment with Gromyko" and deliver to the Soviet Foreign Minister a message which expressed "a most grave view" of the Ban Padong incident. "The occurrence of such a deliberate, carefully prepared offensive military action," the Secretary of State continued, could not be "reconciled with the understanding reached before the Geneva Conference on Laos was convened that the Conference should not meet until there was a cease-fire," nor with the discussions held in Vienna between Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko. Because of the Ban Padong fighting, the Secretary of State believed it imperative that the Geneva co-chairmen instruct the ICC "to fulfill from this moment its functions of supervising the cease-fire" and at the same time call upon the Laotian factions to cooperate with the Commission. The course followed by the US delegation at Geneva, Secretary Rusk warned, would hinge upon the effectiveness of the cease-fire and the degree of cooperation given the ICC.

(On 16 June at Geneva, Foreign Minister Gromyko handed Ambassador Harriman a reply to Secretary Rusk's message.

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The cause of the Ban Padong attack, Mr. Gromyko insisted, was RLG incursions, including the dropping of parachutists and supplies, into airspace controlled by forces of Kong Le and the Pathet Lao. Thus, according to the Soviet Foreign Minister the RLG was responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. Mr. Gromyko then stated that the USSR desired a peaceful settlement to the Laotian crisis.

In commenting upon Foreign Minister Gromyko's reply and the general Soviet attitude at Geneva, Ambassador Harriman informed the Secretary of State that the USSR was trying to interpret the cease-fire in such a way that: 1) the Pathet Lao forces would be able to mop up RLG units isolated behind their lines; 2) efforts of the RLG to supply these units would be considered violations of the truce; 3) the RLG would not be allowed to post troops in areas not physically occupied at the moment the cease-fire went into effect; and 4) the ICC, with no equipment of its own, would not be allowed to visit areas beyond the front lines. Ambassador Harriman recommended a firm reply to the "arrogant attitude reflected in Gromyko's note . . ." and requested guidance for the conduct of the US delegation at Geneva.)

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(S) Msgs, State to Moscow, NIACT 2138, 7 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONF 232, 20 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONF 256, 22 Jun 61.

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7 Jun 61 The French, after consultations with the US and UK, presented to the Geneva Conference a draft protocol dealing with ICC control machinery. The French draft sought agreement among the 14 nations on the following 12 articles:

1. The establishment of an ICC responsible for supervising and controlling the Laotian cease-fire as well as

the

the kingdom's declaration of neutrality. The Commission was to act "in close cooperation" with the Government of Laos, which would "ensure that the assistance requested by the Commission and its services is provided at all administrative and military levels."

2. The ICC was to have both fixed and mobile inspection teams; a sufficient number of operation centers, particularly at the main points of entry to and exit from the kingdom; and the ability to move its installations according to need.

3. The inspection teams were to have free and unrestricted access to all parts of Laos; access to relevant documents; and full freedom to inspect, at any time, known or suspected military installations, establishments, units, organizations, and activities.

4. The ICC would have unimpeded use of its own logistic resources, "including all means of transport and communications for the effective performance of its duties."

5. The Lao Government was to insure the security of the Commission and its inspection teams.

6. ICC inspections could be carried out at the request of either the Lao Government, any one member of the Commission, or any one member of an inspection team.

7. Decisions of the Commission relating to operations, inspections, or procedural matters were to be made by majority vote.

8. The ICC was to issue a quarterly report to the membership of the Geneva Conference. In case of emergency, however, the Commission might submit special reports along with recommendations for action by the Conference. In the event of disagreement, commission members could submit minority reports.

9. The



9. The ICC would remain in being until the conference nations agreed that it should be terminated, "and in any case until 21 July 1964." Upon its termination, the Commission would render a final report to the Conference.

10. Ambassadors of the conference nations would meet annually.

11. A method was proposed by which the conference nations would pay the costs of the ICC.

12. Articles 26-40 of the 1954 agreement were declared superseded. These obsolete articles prescribed the organization, responsibilities, and method of operation for the existing ICC.

As had been agreed before the draft was introduced, Ambassador Harriman merely reserved the right to offer comment on or amendments to the French draft (see item 20 June 1961), while British co-chairman MacDonald expressed full support of the proposal. To emphasize the more satisfactory nature of the French draft, Mr. MacDonald called attention to the Soviet version (see item 17 May 1961) and noted that the USSR, unlike France, sought to undermine the 1954 agreement. Specifically, the Soviets would: 1) eliminate the French presence authorized in 1954; 2) remove from the ICC those peace-keeping functions assigned it in 1954; 3) force the ICC to seek the consent of the Geneva co-chairmen before undertaking investigations; 4) require unanimous decisions by the ICC on all but procedural matters; and 5) provide only perfunctory treatment of the problem of controlling the introduction of arms into Laos.

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 116, 4 Jun 61; CONFE 139, 7 Jun 61.

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According

7 Jun 61 According to a press release in Pravda, Mikoyan, speaking at a Kremlin luncheon, had stated in the presence of Souvanna and Souphanouvong that "'as far as he knew'" Souphanouvong was satisfied with the position the Soviet Government had taken in the Vienna talks (see item 3, 4 June 1961) and that the USSR would support this position in the Geneva talks. However, earlier in his speech Mikoyan had said that the international conference at Geneva could not decide all questions as this would amount to interference in the affairs of the kingdom and would be "'a new form of colonial rule over Laos.'" In response, Souvanna had declared that he was fully convinced of the "disinterested" nature of Soviet support and aid for Laos. Certain countries, the Laotian Prince noted, had "ulterior" motives in the Geneva Conference, but he was confident that with the help of friendly countries, and above all the USSR, it would be possible to extricate the Conference from its impasse. Having received information from Khrushchev on his Vienna meeting with President Kennedy, he and his brother, said Souvanna, would be able to map out a course of action at Geneva. They would, he pointed out, be "patient, stubborn and persistent" in pursuing their goals of "'happiness of people, independence of country, and sovereignty kingdom of Laos, full agreement and unity of all layers of population.'"

On the same day the Soviet press reported that Khrushchev had received the two Laotian Princes. According to the news release, they had discussed a Laotian "'peaceful settlement'" and "further" developments in Laotian-Soviet relations.

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(OUO) Msgs, Moscow to SecState, 3057, 8 Jun 61; 3044, 7 Jun 61.

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8-10  
Jun 61

The US Consul General at Geneva, disturbed by the reaction of America's Southeast Asian Allies to continuation of the French presence in Laos (see items 1 and 3 June 1961), on 8 June informed the Secretary of State that he believed US support at Geneva of the French presence in Laos required a "clear understanding between Washington and Paris" of France's "intentions and will to assume fully significant obligations, particularly with respect to the future training of the FAL." In particular he suggested that the US Government determine the French views on: 1) the prevention of subversions and indirect aggression against a neutral Laos; 2) the size of the future training mission; 3) the type of training envisioned; 4) equipment for the Lao forces; and 5) financing the mission.

While the Government of France was being sounded out on these subjects, the US delegation at Geneva should impress upon the French: 1) the seriousness with which the US regarded the French role in Laos, and 2) the need for US-French cooperation in military planning and in planning for the withdrawal of US advisers.

As for the complaints made by the Southeast Asian nations, the Ambassador suggested that a special effort be made to clarify US motives (see item 27 June 1961) for seeking continuation of the French presence and to emphasize "our firm intention to urge the French to follow through on their obligations with our support."

On 9 June, US Ambassador Gavin at Paris expressed to the Secretary of State his concurrence with the view that the US should initiate discussions with the French "in light of their assuming the primary role in the military field in Laos . . . . After observing that the points raised in the Geneva message were "doubtless of interest to the US," Ambassador Gavin

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advised against giving the impression that "our objective is to put the French in the dock and insist they carry out a military program in Laos along the same lines we have followed." To argue "over the nuts and bolts of a military program for Laos" or to attempt to supervise the details of a French program could dissipate the favorable atmosphere existing between the US and France.

The US Ambassador at Vientiane suggested on 10 June that the Secretary of State "add a further point to Geneva's list" of items to be discussed with the French. This point was the French attitude toward the FAL. At present, the Ambassador observed, the French military seemed to consider the Lao "practically untrainable" (see item 20 June 1961).

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 146, 7 Jun 61; Paris to SecState, 5449, 9 Jun 61; Vientiane to SecState, 2241, 10 Jun 61.

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8-14  
Jun 61

On 8 June, Chairman Sen of the ICC, in a message to the RLG, expressed the Commission's deep concern about the recent hostilities at Ban Padong (see item 7 June 1961). Having obtained from the three factions agreement in principle to inspections, he now proposed that the ICC, on its own initiative, visit those critical areas where large numbers of opposing troops were in close proximity. Chairman Sen therefore requested prompt agreement at the Ban Namone cease-fire talks on those special arrangements, such as transportation, which would enable the ICC to make these inspections. Ambassador Brown considered the ICC proposal a "major victory" for the RLG and believed that Phoumi should cooperate.

On 10 June, as a result of the Commission's offer to conduct investigations, the JCS authorized CINCPAC to approve the

the RLG's use of US-supplied equipment to assist the ICC in conducting inspections.

At Geneva, also on 10 June, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, during an "hour's inconclusive argument" with US Ambassador Harriman, rejected a US proposal that the Soviet and British co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference issue instructions to the ICC to investigate the Ban Padong incident. Although Ambassador Harriman produced a copy of Chairman Sen's message to the RLG, the Soviet Foreign Minister remained adamant. Finally, Ambassador Harriman suggested that the co-chairman call upon both the RLG and the Pathet Lao to stop violating the cease-fire. The Soviet diplomat made no direct reply at this time, but the co-chairmen did send a message to the Laotian factions urging their cooperation with the ICC in the supervision of the truce.

At the Ban Namone meeting of 14 June, the Ban Padong incident and the Commission's offer to make inspections were discussed. Although the RLG had lodged with the ICC a protest that opposition forces had violated the truce, the Government's delegation at Ban Namone did not, in Ambassador Brown's opinion, press its case with enough vigor. Thus, the Pathet Lao, in spite of the Commission's offer to investigate and the co-chairmen's request for cooperation, succeeded in preventing an ICC visit to the Ban Padong area.

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 166, 10 Jun 61. Geneva to SecState, CONF 183, 13 Jun 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 997398, 10 Jun 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2230, 9 Jun 61; 2268, 14 Jun 61.

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8, 15  
Jun 61

On 8 June, Ambassador Harriman called upon Souvanna at Geneva to discuss the future neutrality and independence of Laos. During their conversation, Souvanna accepted the Ambassador's assurances

assurances that the US wanted nothing except an independent and truly neutral Laos and explained that the US views, as stated by Mr. Harriman, coincided with his own. Souvanna maintained that, in his opinion, the Soviet Union would support Laotian neutrality and independence. When asked if he could withstand organized Communist pressure, Souvanna replied that he would have to form a single mass party to oppose the NLHX, which he regarded as Socialist rather than Communist. Souvanna also commented on various other aspects of Lao politics and stated that he would be grateful for any help the US might give in the formation of a coalition government.

In reporting this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Harriman pointed out that Souvanna considered himself "the one man to lead his country, confident he can control the left-wingers and arouse national popular support."

On 15 June, Souvanna returned Ambassador Harriman's call. During this second meeting, Souvanna commented upon a variety of topics, none of which Ambassador Harriman considered either new or particularly significant. In substance, Souvanna suggested that the US urge Boun Oum and Phoumi to be conciliatory during the forthcoming Zurich meeting (see item 22 June 1961) and to have confidence in Souvanna.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 175, 11 Jun 61; (C) Msgs, CONFE 152, 8 Jun 61; 192, 14 Jun 61; 199, 15 Jun 61.

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9 Jun 61 The US delegation to the Geneva Conference reported that "tentative force levels for the FAL contained in current drafts of documents to be tabled at the Geneva Conference as a result of US-UK-French discussion show a FAL of 20,000 plus 3,000 gendarmerie." The problem of integration, the  
report

report continued, had not yet been discussed in detail, but the US delegation did not consider it feasible to "avoid the problem of force levels until after the problem of integration is worked out." The report further stated that the "thinking at Geneva was that "proportional reduction in forces on both sides would be a gradual process with integration as the final step." It also was noted that the US, UK, and French delegations had agreed that every effort should be made to avoid integration at the battalion level (see items 22 June, 13 September, and 20 October 1961).

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 160, 9 Jun 61.

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10 Jun 61 CHMAAG Laos, responding to CINCPAC's 24 May message concerning FAL training (see item), described the various training projects being carried out by the MAAG during the cease-fire:

1. Battalion level training in Thailand.
2. "On-site" training in leadership and tactics "in contact units."
3. English-language training which, if successful, could bring about expansion in CONUS school quotas.
4. Civil affairs and psychological warfare training, and several troop indoctrination programs.
5. Marksmanship.
6. Artillery



6. Artillery training including, for instance, instruction in conversion from French to US fire direction control systems.
7. NCO schools and officer "refresher courses."
8. Instruction by both MAAG and ECCOIL (Filipino) technicians in training aids, river flotilla operations, engineering, ordnance, quartermaster, signal, and transportation skills.
9. A proposed military intelligence course for the new Lao military intelligence service.

Other fields in which the MAAG was particularly active were: inspection to determine the status of units and programs; assistance in rehabilitation of equipment; coordination in the FAL reorganization and updating of TOEs; and reorganization of the Lao Air Force under USAF concepts.

Realization of these programs on the "intensified basis" the JCS had directed (see item 29 April 1961) would, CHMAAG said, depend upon authorization for and receipt of additional US personnel. As presently manned (see item 26 June 1961), the MAAG would have to carry out its programs on a "first things first" basis; it could not conduct them all simultaneously. CHMAAG recommended, therefore, that 10 additional WSMTT teams be authorized on a temporary duty basis (see item 22 August 1961) and that the MAAG be permanently augmented by from 30 to 80 personnel spaces (see item 1 December 1961).

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 121044,  
10 Jun 61; JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61).

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11 Jun 61 The US Counselor in Bangkok forwarded to the Secretary of State a list of "dissatisfactions and complaints regarding the Geneva Conference" which had led the Thai Government to conclude that its further participation would be of doubtful value and which might cause Thailand to withdraw from the Conference.

The specific complaints and sources of dissatisfaction listed by the US Counselor were: 1) Thailand's "fundamental doubt" that a conference should be relied upon in preference to the "more forceful action" which the Thais had "advocated through SEATO or otherwise"; 2) Thai convictions regarding a "British sell-out" on the seating of the Pathet Lao delegates at Geneva; 3) the apparent Western willingness to continue the Conference in the absence of both an effective cease-fire and satisfactory instructions to the ICC; 4) Thailand's lack of success in presenting its point of view at Geneva; 5) the apparent Western and Communist desire for a Lao coalition government, the type of government which the Thais believed would bring about a Communist take-over of the kingdom; 6) lack of information from the US on the Vienna meeting (see item 3-4 June 1961), even though the future of Laos was one of the subjects discussed; 7) French, and to some extent British, reluctance to consult with Thailand and the

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other pro-Western Asian states; and 8) the apparent inability of the US to "state what our proposals are for meeting the contingencies of conference failure or large-scale breaking of the cease-fire."

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2236, 11 Jun 61.

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12 Jun 61 According to the JCS Laos weekly situation report, "following sporadic enemy mortar fire extending over a two-day period, troops from two Lao Army outposts near Hat Bo, about 30 miles northeast of Paksane, withdrew about 3 miles south." These outposts, the situation report noted, had been occupied without opposition by the FAL after the 3 May cease-fire declaration.

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(TS JCS Laos Sitrep No. 143-61, 15 Jun 61; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 122052, 14 Jun 61.

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13 Jun 61 During a luncheon for Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, US Ambassador Harriman asked for Mr. Gromyko's views concerning some form of international economic assistance for Laos, a subject which Ambassador Harriman intended to introduce before

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the Conference. The Soviet Foreign Minister, after observing that this was not a proper subject for the Conference, stated that the international regulation of economic aid would be an invasion of Laotian sovereignty and therefore unacceptable to the USSR.

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(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 186, 14 Jun 61.

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14 Jun 61 CINCPAC inactivated the US Element, SEATO Field Forces - a component furnished for SEATO Plan 5, and reactivated CJTF-116 - an element of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (see item 6 April 1961). At the same time, CINCPAC established the following DEFCONs:

1. DEFCON 3 for forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF-116.
2. DEFCON 3 for forces earmarked for and in direct support of SEATO Plan 5.
3. DEFCON 4 for the remainder of PACOM forces. Under these DEFCONs, reaction time of PACOM forces, from receipt of an execution order to the first landing of troops in Vientiane, would be 96 hours.

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(TS) Msgs, ADMINO CINCPAC to JCS, 132037Z Jun 61; ADMINO CINCPAC to CSFF (designate), et al., 132040Z Jun 61.

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14 Jun 61 CINCPAC assessed for CHMAAG Laos the likely Communist reaction to the implementation of SEATO Plan 5, or a comparable unilateral US plan, as follows:

1. The USSR would not regard Laos under present conditions as the proper place for a full-scale showdown with the US.
2. The Chinese Communists and DRV might intervene under the "military volunteer technique," hoping in this way to  
make

make it clear that they did not threaten the continental US or the American people as such, but were simply aiming at the single target of foreign military forces in Laos.

3. If Plan 5 was implemented, the Communists would probably react initially with "propaganda and political measures," followed perhaps by introduction of "volunteers" as follows:

a. One DRV regiment (wet season) or division (dry season) each to the Plaine des Jarres, the Kam Khat area, and the Tchepone area.

b. Possibly one Chinese regiment or division to Sam Neua.

Even if DRV "volunteers" intervened, the military situation did not necessarily go beyond the scope of Plan 5.

4. The execution of Plan 5 would cause additional frictions with the Communists in Laos, but the situation was not likely to escalate seriously.

If the DRV entered Laos in organized units in reaction to Plan 5, CINCPAC added, SEATO forces should attack them by air. If DRV air units then attacked SEATO forces, their bases in North Viet Nam should be destroyed.

(On 24 June, CINCPAC furnished an identical report to the JCS, less only his final opinions on air attack. Additionally he told the JCS that, in his opinion, Plan 5 should be implemented.)

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 140523Z Jun 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 242040Z Jun 61.

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14 Jun 61 Princes Souvanna and Souphanouvong appeared before the Geneva Conference. Souvanna, in the course of his speech, stated that: 1) the ICC, although it "possibly could assist in cases where the Lao themselves were not in agreement," should not replace

replace the tripartite [RLG-Souvanna-Pathet Lao] military commission in arranging a cease-fire; 2) in addition to preventing foreign interference, the ICC might later supervise elections; 3) Laos would reconstitute a national army; 4) neither the passage through Laos of foreign troops nor the presence of foreign bases would be allowed; and 5) SEATO protection of the kingdom would have to be cancelled.

Souphanouvong was judged by the US delegation to have "used the occasion more effectively than Souvanna to project his ideas and personality." Among other things, Souphanouvong stated that: 1) his NLHX controlled 80 per cent of Laos and was supported by 90 per cent of the population; 2) he was in agreement with the policies of Souvanna's Xieng Khouang government; 3) the Laotian people themselves could solve the problems of forming a national government, organizing elections, unifying the factional armies, accepting foreign aid, and improving economic conditions; 4) he preferred the Soviet draft protocol to the French version, for in his opinion the latter violated the sovereignty of Laos; and 5) he desired the removal of all foreign troops from the kingdom. These statements were accompanied by "intemperate attacks on the US" and references to "NLHX force and power."

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(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 195, 15 Jun 61.

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15 Jun 61 The JCS answered a series of questions, put by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 8 May 1961, on the use of nuclear weapons in any direct engagement with the Chinese Communists. Among the questions posed and answered were two particularly pertinent to the Laotian situation, as follows:

1. Against

1. Against available Chinese Communist forces, could US and Allied forces hold a defensive line in mainland Southeast Asia? If so, approximately where?

a. Without the use of nuclear weapons, the defense of "key areas" in Thailand, including the Mekong River line, and of the Saigon area would be possible, the JCS said, under the following conditions:

(1) Political stability of pro-Western governments in Thailand, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam.

(2) Full political and necessary military support by the SEATO nations.

(3) Immediate employment of required US forces and prompt initiation of partial mobilization by the US.

b. With nuclear weapons used only in air defense and ASW and tactically against enemy forces, or with unrestricted use of nuclear weapons, the US and its Allies could hold a defensive line running roughly from Tourane through the Kontum-Kleiku plateau in South Viet Nam and the Pakse-Bolovens plateau in Laos, to and thence along the Mekong River. Even if the Chinese responded in kind with Soviet-furnished nuclear weapons, the US and its Allies could hold this line, although rapid reconstruction of support facilities and immediate US and SEATO mobilization would be required.

2. Were there any military actions that the US could take now which would significantly affect the answer(s) to the above question(s)?

"Depending upon the degree of warning received prior to US intervention," the JCS said, "US capabilities would be enhanced



enhanced by the substantial deployment of combat forces to the area of operations." Moreover, there were numerous logistics actions - construction and modernization of air, rail, pipeline, port, road, electronic communication, and storage facilities - that would enhance US capabilities. Increased MAP support of indigenous forces, strengthening of friendly internal security forces, and acceleration and expansion of covert and guerrilla programs would likewise strengthen the US and Allied position in Southeast Asia.

In their memorandum forwarding these answers to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS reasserted their belief that the US did not presently have the capability to conduct a "full-scale nonnuclear war" with the Chinese Communists. For this reason, US intervention in any area where subsequent overt Chinese Communist intervention was possible should be undertaken only after a "firm US governmental decision . . . that the US is thereby prepared and committed to succeed . . . to the extent required by its National objectives, regardless of possible subsequent escalation." And, the JCS concluded, any full-scale nonnuclear operation in Southeast Asia would seriously restrict the capability of the US to conduct similar operations simultaneously elsewhere. Therefore, "a degree of mobilization," expansion of the war production base, augmentation of lift capabilities and waiver of financial limitations would be required in such event.

(See item 3 July 1961.)

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(TS) JSCM-405-61 to SecDef, w/att, 15 Jun 61, derived from JCS 2118/156, 9 Jun 61; JMF 9141/3072 (8 May 61).

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15 Jun 61 The Canadian Minister for External Affairs made a "strong plea" that the Geneva Conference provide the ICC as soon as possible with those "essential technical means" for truce supervision which the Commission had already requested (see item 29 May 1961). Specifically, the Canadian diplomat desired that the ICC be given immediately at least three light aircraft and three helicopters with the personnel necessary for their upkeep and operation.

(This Canadian request prefaced a joint US-French offer, made to the co-chairman on 16 June, of equipment for use by the ICC. Included among the items were three US H-34 helicopters. On 17 June, however, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko refused to agree to the conference's responding to the ICC request for equipment.) (See item 21-22 June 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 203, 16 Jun 61; CONFE 213, 17 Jun 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 202, 16 Jun 61.

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16 Jun 61 The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US desired to investigate the possibility of creating under the RLG Interior Ministry an independent and unified civil police force prior to the Geneva settlement. The US hoped thereby, the Secretary said, to pre-empt the post-settlement training of the police and thus maintain as much influence as possible over this element of state security. The Department of State believed that the civil police should be entirely separate from both the army and the gendarmerie; that US civilians should perform the training; and that support of the police should therefore be dealt with under the economic provisions of the Geneva settlement.

(On the following day, the US delegation at Geneva advised the Secretary that there was "no possibility, . . . in any protocol coming out of this conference," that US training units would be allowed for Lao police or military forces, under economic or military assistance projects. Nonetheless, US officials in Laos developed a plan for such a separate police force; see item 21 August 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1378, 16 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 212, 17 Jun 61.

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16-21  
Jun 61

In response to a request by the Secretary of State that the US delegation at Geneva review its negotiating tactics, Ambassador Harriman on 16 June expressed to the Secretary of State "some thoughts" concerning the principles upon which the US effort at Geneva was based. In addition to asking guidance from the Department of State, Ambassador Harriman asked that the US Ambassadors at Bangkok, Saigon, and

Vientiane

Vientiane inform him of the views of their host governments on the "thoughts" he was expressing.

The first idea set forth by the Ambassador was that the only alternative to the settlement of the Laotian crisis by means of an international conference was the use of force. The US, however, had chosen negotiations in preference to military action and its attendant risk of escalation.

"Having chosen the conference route," he continued, "we must accustom ourselves to accept less than perfect solutions to each of the problems as they arise, unless we are prepared to turn back to the alternative of force."

Ambassador Harriman then suggested that the US, if the Zurich meeting (see item 22 June 1961) did not result in a unified Lao delegation, should encourage the RLG to bring its delegates to the conference table so that the Boun Oum government could present its views.

Turning to the subject of the cease-fire, the Ambassador expressed his belief that the US, by placing the onus for truce violations on the Communists, had gained "world support on this issue" and forced the Communists to restrain the Pathet Lao forces, thus strengthening the bargaining position of the RLG. Extreme emphasis on cease-fire violations, however, might, in Ambassador Harriman's opinion, cause the Conference to collapse. He therefore recommended that the US, while reserving the right to bring future violations to the attention of the Conference, should now turn to such "substantive aspects of the conference agenda" as control machinery, limitations on military forces, declarations of neutrality, and, possibly, economic aid.

Finally, Ambassador Harriman expressed confidence that the US could obtain a satisfactory status for Laos, provided that a "reasonably balanced government of national unity" was established. He stressed, however, that the accomplishment

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of this goal would require "a lot of cooperation and willingness at times to deviate from rigid concepts which the course of this conference has proven to be impractical."

On 18 June, the US Ambassador at Vientiane stated his agreement with the message from Geneva "about the desirability of the RLG delegation's accepting the facts of life and taking its place at the conference." Since he considered it useless to discuss RLG policy with anyone but Phoumi, Ambassador Brown urged most strongly that Ambassador Harriman make every effort to see Phoumi.

Ambassador Brown also agreed that the Geneva Conference should turn to more substantial issues, even though he doubted that the RLG's bargaining position had been strengthened or that the Pathet Lao had given up the offensive. He believed, however, that the US should continue to seek improvements in the machinery of the ICC and to stress those cease-fire violations in which the Communists were clearly at fault. Referring to the comment in the Geneva message about less than perfect solutions, Ambassador Brown stated his conviction that the US would have to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister if the partition of Laos was to be avoided.

The Secretary of State on 21 June forwarded to Geneva his comments on Ambassador Harriman's assessment of conference tactics. Secretary Rusk agreed in general with the Ambassador's views on the accomplishments of the Conference and stated that these achievements, principally the fixing of blame on the Communists for truce violations, would "stand us in good stead" if negotiations should collapse and "we are forced to turn to other measures."

The attitude of both Thailand and South Viet Nam, the nations most directly concerned with a Laotian settlement, troubled

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troubled the Secretary of State. Should these nations withdraw from the Conference, the US position would be "considerably embarrassed and weakened."

Finally, Secretary Rusk noted that the time might come when agreement was patently impossible and expressed the hope that, in such event, a number of delegations would join the US in terminating the conference.

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(S) Msgs, State to Geneva, FECON NIACT 129, 15 Jun 61; FECON 162, 21 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 205, 16 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2290, 18 Jun 61.

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17 Jun 61 The CNO informed the Secretary of Defense that the JCS, mindful of the "over-riding political considerations," accepted the terms of reference for the talks between CINCPAC and UK Admiral Luce (see items 9 and 29 May and 2 June 1961), but on the assumptions that:

1. The terms of reference would not be interpreted to indicate that the ultimate US objective was a Laos divided along the 3 May cease-fire line.

2. The proposed plan for intervention would not be introduced into SEATO, nor would a proposal be made to revise SEATO Plan 5 in accordance with the terms of reference. The objectives of the proposed plan were less than those of SEATO Plan 5, the CNO said; its introduction into SEATO would, therefore, have a very adverse effect upon all SEATO members except the UK and France.

3. Every effort would be made to avoid the appearance of US-UK combined planning, because it too would have a detrimental effect upon other Allies.

On the same day, CNO, acting for CJCS, warned CINCPAC that the British might attempt to use the Felt-Luce conversations as a beginning for combined planning. CINCPAC was instructed

instructed to "make it very clear" that combined US-UK planning was not acceptable to the US.

CINCPAC was also cautioned to reject any British proposal that agreements reached during the conversations be submitted to SEATO as modifications to Plan 5. Such a "white man's solution" to an Asiatic problem "would not be readily accepted by our Asiatic friends."

(On the following day, CINCPAC expressed his "wholehearted concurrence with CNO that no effort should be made in SEATO to change the objectives of Plan 5.)

(See item 22 June 1961.)

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(TS) Memo, CNO to SecDef, 17 Jun 61, encl to JCS 2344/3, 24 Jul 61; JMF 5412 (17 Jun 61); (TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 997726, 17 Jun 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 182350Z Jun 61.

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20 Jun 61 Ambassador Harriman placed before the Geneva Conference draft provisions designed to supplement the French draft protocol on ICC machinery (see item 7 June 1961). The US proposals, which consisted of articles 13 through 22 of what came to be known as the French-US draft, called for the following:

13. The ICC would control the movement of "all military personnel and advisers, armaments, munitions, and military equipment" into and out of Laos.

14. As soon as the ICC had established sufficient operation centers to carry out the tasks outlined in article 13 and considered itself ready to begin functioning throughout Laos, it would "so notify the Government of Laos and the members of the Conference." After an agreed interval had elapsed, the Commission would commence its operations.

15. Not later than 30 days after the protocol entered into force, the ICC would take census of the various armed forces throughout the kingdom.

16. All



16. All foreign military personnel and advisers, except the French whose presence was consistent with the 1954 agreement, were to be withdrawn by an agreed date.

17. The ICC was to supervise the disposition of armament in excess of the needs of a unified Lao Army.

18. No armaments, munitions, or military equipment inconsistent with the role and mission of the Lao Army could be introduced into the kingdom.

19. Prisoners of war and civilian internees were to be released to the custody of the ICC for repatriation to the destinations of their choice.

20. Reprisals against former enemies were forbidden.

21. Articles 10 and 19 of the 1954 agreement were declared superseded. These articles had established the points through which foreign troops might enter Laos and extended to the kingdom the terms of the 1954 cease-fire.

22. Subject to the conditions in article 14, the protocol would enter into force on the day that it was signed.

(On 21 June, the French delegation "welcomed the US draft military provisions" but reserved detailed comment pending further study. Soviet co-chairman Pushkin on the following day charged that the "'Franco-American'" proposals "proved that the West was hostile toward the independence and neutrality of Laos." The type of ICC called for in the French-US draft, Mr. Pushkin continued, would interfere in the kingdom's domestic affairs. Since the basic aims of the Conference were to deal with Laotian external affairs, he concluded that the Western proposals were contrary to the purpose of the Geneva Conference.

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(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 253, 21 Jun 61; CONF 269, 23 Jun 61; (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 240, 20 Jun 61.

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20 Jun 61 The Secretary of State, in response to recommendations that the US discuss with the Government of France the possible future role of a French Military Mission in Laos (see item 8-10 August 1961), approved the initiation of preliminary talks on this subject and provided guidance for presentations by the US Ambassador at Paris and the US delegation at Geneva. A similar presentation, Secretary Rusk added, would be made to the French Embassy at Washington. Although unwilling to suggest it at the time, the Secretary of State expressed the hope that the French would offer to enter into detailed military discussions to work out plans for the replacement by a French mission of the MAAG in Laos.

In brief, the US presentations were to include: 1) an observation that a French Military Mission, such as had been authorized by the 1954 agreement, was contemplated in the US/French draft protocol under consideration at Geneva (see previous item); 2) a statement of the importance of a French Military Mission, with emphasis on the fact that not even a strengthened ICC could effectively safeguard the neutrality of Laos unless the kingdom had, at the least, an army able to "contain illegal armed forces in the country and inhibit the resurgence of Pathet Lao guerrilla activity;" and 3) a series of specific questions to elicit French views on the composition and mission of the Lao armed forces, the type of training to be given, the type and size of the mission, the equipping of Lao forces, the financing of the mission, the "potential capabilities" of Lao soldiers and officers, and the prevention of Communist subversion.

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(S) Msg, State to Paris, 5812, 20 Jun 61.

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20 Jun 61 As the meeting of the Laotian Princes at Zurich was getting underway, US diplomats held discussions with Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and with Phoumi separately. Sihanouk expressed belief that the three Princes should concentrate on the framing of an "international statute" for Laos and on the appointment by the King of a unified Lao delegation to the Geneva Conference. Sihanouk also stated that complete agreement would not be reached at Zurich, that the integration of Pathet Lao forces into a unified Lao Army was the most dangerous issue facing Boun Oum's government, and that, since the King probably would not serve as Prime Minister, Souvanna seemed the only other possible candidate for that office.

Phoumi also seemed "gloomy" concerning the prospects for agreement at Zurich. He held out scant hope for agreement on the appointment of a unified delegation or for acceptance by Souvanna and Souphanouvong of the King as Prime Minister. Also, Phoumi refused to allow the RLG delegation to sit at the conference table but seemed willing to have the delegation available at Geneva. He felt that a failure at Zurich could lead to the collapse of the Geneva Conference and the resumption of hostilities. After stating this hypothesis, Phoumi asked for a clear enunciation of US policy in the event that fighting erupted anew. He was told, however, only that the US considered it desirable to continue negotiations and preserve the cease-fire.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 241, 20 Jun 61;  
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 236, 20 Jun 61.

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During a discussion on 21 June of the proposed responsibilities and rights of the ICC, the Canadian delegation again (see item 15 June 1961) urged that sufficient equipment be provided the existing ICC to enable it to carry out its functions. Because of the French-US offer of "adequate equipment," there was no need for debate by the Conference. Instead, the co-chairmen needed only to accept the existing offer. The US, France, and the UK supported the Canadian stand.

On the following day, the Soviet co-chairman insisted that the ICC continue to obtain its equipment from the "parties in Laos." The Conference, however, agreed that the three ICC nations represented at Geneva should inquire of the Commission members if sufficient equipment was available from Laotian sources.

(The British co-chairman later agreed to Pushkin's proposal that the ICC be directed to acquire equipment from the parties in Laos. When the UK co-chairman withdrew his consent, his Soviet counterpart on 10 July said that, although no message would be sent, the issue had been settled by an offer of equipment on the part of Souvanna's Xieng Khouang faction. Since Boun Oum's RLG had made no offer, Mr. Pushkin noted that "as far as the Savannakhet group was concerned . . . this question 'indeed remains obscure.'" (See item 11-13 July 1961.)

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 260, 22 Jun 61;  
(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 269, 23 Jun 61; CONFE 361, 11 Jul 61.

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Ambassador Harriman, noting reports from Zurich which indicated Souvanna was proving perhaps more inflexible than Souphanouvong toward the RLG, informed the Secretary  
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of State that "Souvanna seems to need some concerted effort, especially on the part of Western friends to:

- a) get him to act like the real neutral he claims to be;
- b) give him the facts of life about Russian tactics, particularly for dumping, once Soviet designs are achieved, those who count on their support; and c) tie in with non-Communists as much as possible, such as inducing non-Communist Lao to join him in a move away from complete dependence on the Pathet Lao." On 22 June, Ambassador Harriman reported to the Secretary of State that he had approached French and British diplomats at Geneva on the subject of influencing Souvanna and expressed the hope that further discussions of this subject would be carried on at Paris and London.

In a further effort to influence Souvanna "Westward," Ambassador Harriman on 23 June requested from the Secretary of State authority to extend to Souvanna a renewed invitation to visit Washington (see item 25 June 1961).

(The US Ambassador at Vientiane, commenting upon Ambassador Harriman's efforts to influence Souvanna, on 23 June informed the Secretary of State that he believed the US soon would have to choose between opposing Souvanna, at the risk of renewed hostilities, or trying "positively to influence him." In making such a decision, Ambassador Brown added, the US would need to know more about Souvanna's real intentions. The Prince could provide this knowledge by stating: 1) whether he still believed that the Pathet Lao should be denied key cabinet posts; 2) in what cabinet position he would accept Phoumi; 3) to what extent he would utilize the services of members of the existing RLG and of neutrals not already aligned with him; and 4) whether he would

accept effective control machinery to protect against Viet Minh interference in Laotian affairs.

The Ambassador then pointed out certain difficulties inherent in supporting Souvanna. The Prince was bitter against the US "because of past experience as he interprets it." A shift of support to Souvanna might so disillusion Phoumi that the latter would renew the fighting. Also, US acceptance of Souvanna as Prime Minister in lieu of Phoumi would raise problems with Thailand and South Viet Nam.

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 244, 21 Jun 61; 261, 22 Jun 61; 265, 23 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2321, 23 Jun 61.

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22 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Vientiane reported that the King had informed the French Ambassador that: he 1) fully approved the French drafts submitted to the Geneva Conference (see item 7 June 1961); 2) he would not serve as Prime Minister; and 3) he would accept Souvanna as Prime Minister and Souphanouvong as a member of the cabinet. The King added, however, that any new government would have to be approved by the National Assembly.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2306, 22 Jun 61.

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22 Jun 61 CINCPAC and UK Admiral Luce met on Okinawa to discuss plans and circumstances for intervention in Laos. The two men agreed, at the start of their conversation, that SEATO Plan 5 should not be "scrapped." CINCPAC termed Plan 5 the "proper vehicle for the contemplated action" and he and Luce agreed that it needed only to be modified to meet the current situation in Laos.

In regard to the terms of reference developed for these conversations (see items 9 and 29 May, 2 and 17 June 1961),

Admiral

Admiral Luce emphasized that the UK had not inserted, as a "circumstance of initiation," the agreement of the US and UK on clear failure or Communist violation of cease-fire (see item 2 June 1961) in order to tie the hands of one or the other government, but merely to "strengthen the collective US-UK view." CINCPAC agreed, but emphasized the US fear that SEATO would gain the impression that the US and UK were engaged in the bilateral drafting of a SEATO plan for military action (see item 17 June 1961).

Regarding the military objectives in the terms of reference Admiral Luce stated that the UK considered SEATO would move into only those "key areas" under FAL control. In the UK view, before SEATO could retake "key areas" the FAL had failed to hold, new instructions from the SEATO governments to the SEATO Field Force would be necessary. CINCPAC called this a "disturbing restriction."

As the conversation continued, Admiral Luce indicated that he considered the reaction to the contingency of substantial DRV reinforcement of the Pathet Lao to be the "key" to any SEATO plan of action in Laos. He felt that if DRV forces crossed into Laos but did not come into contact with SEATO forces, Communist China would remain in the background; but if DRV and SEATO forces did clash, the Chinese would "react positively." CINCPAC thought that the Communists would probably respond initially with "volunteer units" and a world-wide propaganda offensive, or they might initiate a "Plan 5 in reverse" to free the Pathet Lao for combat. The two men agreed that, for any open DRV intervention, the SEATO should grant the DRV no sanctuaries in Laos. Moreover, if the DRV forces were reinforced and threatened SEATO forces or if DRV planes based in North Viet Nam (Luce could agree to these two actions only "militarily";

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"militarily"; and he was not optimistic about the chances of securing his government's agreement).

Finally Admiral Luce asked how the modifications needed for Plan 5 would be introduced into SEATO. He was, CINCPAC thought, "feeling out" CINCPAC to see if the US would be willing to introduce the necessary modifications. CINCPAC replied only that the "discussions had been productive" and that the US and UK should individually make recommendations through the SEATO Military Programs Office (MPO) for changes to Plan 5.

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 231944Z Jun 1961; OCJCS Files, 091-Laos (3).

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22 Jun 61 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS, adopting recommendations by CINCPAC and the Laos Country Team, urged that the US avoid recommending force objectives for Laos to the Geneva Conference until such time as the details of any future integration of Lao armed forces had been analyzed. (The JCS, CINCPAC, and Country Team comments had all been occasioned by a 24 May request from the US delegation at Geneva for suggestion:

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on the best organization for a force restricted either to 20,000 or to 10,000 men.) In addition, the JCS thought it neither feasible nor realistic to determine specific force levels and composition of forces until the following unknowns were resolved:

1. Composition of the RLG and its national objectives.
2. Extent of Pathet Lao participation in the government at provincial and lower levels.
3. ICC powers.
4. Method by which the Lao forces would receive military assistance.

If the US remained in Laos and continued to train the FAL, the Chiefs said, the forces objectives should be those already approved for MAP support, FY 63-67: 25,000 regular troops and 16,000 ADC. If, however, the US had to develop a position in which the US presence could not be assumed, and while the negotiations at Geneva were still in progress, only the following "general guidance," as presented by CINCPAC, should be advanced:

a. For a neutral Laos, not antagonistic to the United States and SEATO interests, and not communist-oriented, the future Lao military forces should be capable of reinforcing local civilian security forces and capable of rapid expansion to prevent a communist takeover. A strong military base of operations should be located on the strategic terrain of the Plaine de[s] Jarres.

b. If, however, Laos has a government infiltrated by communists and the Lao Force includes Kong Le and Pathet Lao troops integrated at the battalion level, the Lao Force should be a constabulary type of essentially a police force with a military organization. Its mission should be to maintain order among the various Lao ethnic and political groups.

(See item 6 September 1961.)

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(TS) JCSM-426-61 to SecDef, 22 Jun 61, derived from JCS 2344, 19 Jun 61. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 070207Z Jun 61, and 032307Z Jun 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2185, 2 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 49, 24 May 61. All in JMF 9155.2/3100 (6 Jun 61).

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22 Jun 61 At the conclusion of their four-day meeting at Zurich, Princes Boun Oum, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong issued a joint communique on "the problem of attaining national harmony by forming a national union government." According to the communique, the Princes had agreed on certain aspects of a political program for Laos and upon several "immediate tasks" for the national coalition.

The Princes announced their agreement that a provisional government would be formed by means of direct designation and appointment by the King and that this government would carry out a political program based upon a policy of peace and neutrality. The domestic aspects of the program included implementation of the cease-fire and unification of the factional armies into a single national force. In the realm of foreign affairs, the program forbade participation in, or the acceptance of protection from, any military alliance or coalition. Also prohibited were the use by foreign nations of Laotian soil and the establishment in Laos of foreign military bases, with the understanding that the related aspects of the 1954 Geneva agreements would be "the subject of a special study." Other salient principles for the future conduct of foreign relations were: 1) freedom from foreign interference in Laotian domestic affairs; 2) the withdrawal of all foreign troops and personnel, and a ban against their re-introduction; and 3) acceptance of the "direct, unconditional aid of all countries wishing to help Laos build an independent, autonomous national economy on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of Laos."

The communique also stated that the provisional government would carry out immediately the following tasks: 1) appoint a governmental delegation to participate in the Geneva Conference; 2) carry out the cease-fire and restore peace throughout the kingdom;

kingdom; 3) honor obligations undertaken in the name of Laos at the Geneva Conference and implement agreements by the three Laotian political factions; 4) release all political prisoners; 5) organize general elections; and 6) continue during the transitional period those government agencies established during the hostilities.

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(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 264, 23 Jun 61.

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23 Jun 61 In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown stated that in some of the US position papers on Laos, partition was suggested as a fall-back position preferable to an unsatisfactory coalition government controlling the entire country. In his opinion, an acceptable fall-back position would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve simply by negotiation in view of the present power realities on the ground.

Though the PL claimed control of almost the entire country, except for "pockets" of land along the Mekong River, the US, Brown felt, could just as confidently claim firm RLG control of certain areas. The RLG had 7,000 to 9,000 troops in various parts of Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua; sizeable areas in the east and north were under firm RLG control; in the south, the situation was precarious.

The US should not, Brown felt, delude itself into thinking that the RLG had a firmly held southern redoubt into which to withdraw. It was unrealistic for the US to think either that the PL would honestly abide by terms of a proposal to withdraw their forces behind their lines, or that the RLG had any greater capacity to hold any partition line sufficiently extended to protect the whole Lao/Thai border, than it had to hold the present cease-fire line.

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In the Ambassador's view, suggestions for division of the country were unrealistic, and the US should recognize, therefore, that partition did not offer any "easy or peaceful way out."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2316, 23 Jun 61.

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23 Jun 61 During a conversation in Zurich with the US Embassy Counsellor at Vientiane, Phoumi stated that he was "quite satisfied" with the results of the meeting of the Princes (see item 22 June 1961). He based this feeling of satisfaction on the success of the RLG in participating in the conference and sounding out the opposition without being forced to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister-designate. In Phoumi's opinion, the conference at Zurich had resulted in the acceptance by Souvanna and Souphanouvong of the King's "authority and decision." Phoumi also believed that the conference had served to consolidate the support of some of his former political enemies.

Although satisfied with these aspects of the Zurich meeting, Phoumi admitted that everything hinged upon the formation of a coalition government. The RLG, he added, would never yield to the demands of the other sides that Souvanna be installed as Prime Minister.

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(C) US Embassy Counsellor, Vientiane, memo of conversation with Phoumi, 23 Jun 61, OASD (ISA), FER/SEA Branch files.

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25 Jun 61 Ambassador Harriman again met with Souvanna, who was pausing in Geneva while en route to Paris after the conclusion of the Zurich meeting. Mr. Harriman suggested that Souvanna make an informal visit to the US, but this suggestion was rejected. In the Ambassador's opinion, Souvanna was confident of becoming Prime Minister in the coalition government and preferred to make a formal visit to the US after assuming office.

Ambassador

Ambassador Harriman also sounded out Souvanna on several other subjects. Among other things, Souvanna expressed a willingness to have Phoumi in the new government, provided that Phoumi would sever his ties with the FAL. Souvanna also stated that the other Princes would have to agree to his candidacy for the office of Prime Minister before he would seek the King's approval, that the King could by pass the National Assembly in appointing a provisional government, and that the problem of a continued French presence would have to be settled bilaterally between Laos and France. Speaking of neighboring countries, Souvanna maintained that the movement of Viet Minh troops through Laos and into South Viet Nam could be stopped once a neutral Laos had been established. In response to various statements by the Ambassador, Souvanna expressed a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the ICC, showed a realization of his kingdom's need for economic aid, and stated that he owed no political debts to the Communists.

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 277, 25 Jun 61; 278, 26 Jun 61; 285, 26 Jun 61; 287, 26 Jun 61.

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26 Jun 61 The Director of Military Assistance, OASD (ISA), adopting a 22 June recommendation by the JCS, approved, subject only to "possible minor changes," the first Joint Table of Distribution (JTD) for MAAG Laos. The JTD called for 253 US military spaces. This JTD, proposed by CHMAAG Laos on 14 April, had been endorsed by CINCPAC on 17 May with some modifications: the addition of 7 spaces and the conversion of most US civilian spaces to US military spaces. The JTD equalled almost exactly the number of personnel then assigned either PCS or TDY to the MAAG, the CHMAAG had said in proposing it. It did not include personnel spaces for the White Star Mobile Training Teams (WSMTT) presently operating in Laos (see item 22 August 1961).

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(S) Ltr, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, w/encl 14 Apr 61, and 1st Ind, CINCPAC to JCS, 17 May 61. (S) JCSM-424-41 to SecDef, 22 Jun 61, derived from JCS 1849/508, 16 Jun 61. (S) 1st N/H of JCS 1849/508, 28 Jun 61. All in JMF 1040.1 (14 Apr 61).

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27 Jun 61 Special National Intelligence Estimate 10-2-61 estimated as "unlikely" a major military intervention in Southeast Asia during the next few months by either North Viet Nam or Communist China. The Chinese Communists, despite their obduracy at Geneva and ambiguous "intervention" statements, were not making any military deployments to south China. Furthermore, China's own economic crisis would discourage any major military adventure at this time; and such an adventure would be out of character with China's projection of a "reasonable" image in Southeast Asia. Neither was the DRV, progressing as it was with its present tactics of subversion and guerrilla warfare, likely to shift to conventional attack. If, however, in the absence of a firm Geneva agreement, US forces were introduced into Laos, the Bloc reaction would be "strong" (as described in detail by SNIE 58-2-61; see item 5 July 1961).

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(TS) SNIE 10-2-61, 27 Jun 61; J-2 Secretariat.

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27 Jun 61 The Secretary of State informed the US Consul General at Geneva that the US had decided to table at the Geneva Conference a draft protocol providing for the retention of the French military presence in Laos because of "our conclusion that this is the only feasible course of action at present as giving us both credit with the French and a good tactical position at the conference."

Nevertheless, the Secretary of State continued, there remained certain "misgivings" regarding French performance.

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Thus, the US was "not prepared to pay too high a price" for continuation of the French presence, nor did the US consider that its commitment to the French on this issue was "unlimited." The misgivings referred to by Secretary Rusk were: 1) a lack of conviction that France was willing to maintain a first-class military mission over the long run; 2) realization that FAL resentment of the French might make France's task "next to impossible"; and 3) the possibility that the "supporting [of the] French" by the US might increase Thai and Vietnamese suspicions of US intentions (see items 1 and 3 June 1961).

If the French role in Laos became an issue at Geneva, the Secretary of State believed that the US should remain flexible enough to permit the acceptance, as a compromise solution, of the presence of a neutral military mission, preferably one provided by an Asia nation, possibly India.

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(S) Msg, State to Geneva, FECON 190, 27 Jun 61.

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27 Jun 61 Boun Oum and Phoumi called upon US Consul General Martin in Geneva. Phoumi observed that during the Zurich discussions (see item 22 June 1961) Souvanna and Souphanouvong had behaved toward Boun Oum as victors toward the vanquished. In spite of this, Phoumi believed that the RLG faction had won from the opposition at least an acknowledgement of the powers of the Laotian constitution and of the King. If, however, there were to be meaningful negotiations, the existing military imbalance in favor of the Pathet Lao would have to be remedied. In this regard, Phoumi did not believe that the presence in Laos of friendly foreign troops would be necessary, provided that the U emphasized that any Communist military offensive would be met by force.

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Upon being questioned about Souvanna's freedom of action, Phoumi expressed his belief that Souvanna depended completely upon Souphanouvong's military and political support.

Consul General Martin interpreted the conversations to mean that Phoumi desired assurance of US military backing if the RLG and the King should decide to reject a compromise with Souvanna.

(On 28 June, Ambassador Brown commented from Vientiane on the issues raised by Phoumi's conversation, as interpreted by the Consul General at Geneva. Ambassador Brown could not accept Phoumi's opinion that the military equilibrium could be restored without the introduction into Laos of foreign troops. The Ambassador also doubted that the presence of American forces at a few key points along the Mekong would enable the ill-trained FAL to undertake major offensive or defensive operations. Moreover, the US could not be sure that the enemy would remain idle in the event that American troops were deployed along the Mekong. Thus, in the Ambassador's opinion, the US should be prepared to fight "at least a Korean type and perhaps a larger war," before intervening or threatening to intervene.

The Ambassador admitted that the US faced risks in cooperating with Souvanna. He believed, however, that cooperating with Phoumi also entailed risks, for example the possibility that he might seek the partition of the kingdom.

In conclusion, Ambassador Brown pointed out the importance of defining US objectives and actions before promising military aid to Phoumi and the need to establish the "firmest possible political base for . . . military action before undertaking it."

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(TS) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 288, 27 Jun 61;  
Vientiane to SecState, 2332, 28 Jun 61.

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28 Jun 61 The Secretary of State, in a message to the American Embassy at Paris, observed that the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961) had disclosed major concessions on the part of Boun Oum. These concessions were the rejection of SEATO protection, a failure to refer to the need for effective control machinery, and the acceptance of direct economic aid from all countries. The Secretary of State added, however, that the communique could not be implemented unless the King bypassed the assembly to form a coalition government. Both the King's agreement to this political procedure and Souvanna's ability to form a balanced coalition seemed "questionable."

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(C) Msg, State to Paris, TOPOL PRIORITY 1856, 28 Jun 61.

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28 Jun 61 The White House promulgated National Security Action Memorandum No. 57, containing approved US policy on the conduct of paramilitary operations in the Cold War. By the provisions of this policy, the Department of Defense would "normally" be responsible for overt paramilitary operations and for any paramilitary operation, [REDACTED] that required significant numbers of trained military personnel, amounts of equipment in excess of normal [REDACTED] stocks, or "military experience of a kind and level peculiar to the Armed Services." [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] (See item 28 July 1961 for the effect of this new policy upon planning for Meo operations in Laos.)

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(S) NSAM No. 57, 28 Jun 61, encl to JCS 1969/217, 6 Jul 61; JMF 3310 (18 Jun 61).

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28 Jun 61 The JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a proposed "US Policy for Laos," which they recommended be approved for use during

during Phoumi's impending visit to Washington (see item 29, 30 June 1961). The JCS recommended that the US objective in Laos should remain "an independent and neutral Laos, tied to no outside power or group of powers, threatened by no one and free from any domination." The conditions essential to the achievement of this objective were, the JCS said: 1) a legally-constituted non-Communist government able to maintain the stated objective; 2) an effective cease-fire; 3) effective international machinery to maintain the peace; and 4) economic and technical development for Laos. The US would continue negotiations toward these ends but would, if political negotiation failed, undertake military operations in Laos, either through SEATO, with those SEATO members prepared to participate, or unilaterally.

The JCS posed two further conditions for US intervention: 1) the RLG must request SEATO or US intervention; and 2) the FAL would fight. If the intervention occurred, its objectives would be: 1) to secure the key Mekong Valley centers and the lines of communication connecting them; 2) to assist the FAL in regaining lost areas; 3) to prevent Laos being overrun by the Communists and to keep an RLG in being on Lao soil; and 4) to permit, by the achievement of a substantial military position on the ground, successful political negotiations for a unified, independent, and neutral Laos.

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(TS) JCSM-442-61 to SecDef, 28 Jun 61, derived from JCS 2344/2, 28 Jun 61; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jun 61).

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28, 29  
Jun 61

US Consul General Martin reported from Geneva that the Communists were planning to reap a propaganda harvest from the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961) by creating the impression

impression that this joint statement represented a significant reconciliation on the part of the three Princes. Mr. Martin suggested that, since the US delegation at Geneva could not effectively counteract this sort of propaganda, the Communist interpretation be put to a test. The Department of State might discuss with Ambassador Harriman and with Phoumi a plan whereby the King would summon the Princes to Luang Prabang for the purpose of forming a provisional government. The Consul General believed that Souvanna and Souphanouvong would reject the invitation, thus lessening the effectiveness of Communist propaganda and providing the King with justification to appoint a government of his own choosing, a regime that could be either neutral or militantly anti-Communist as circumstances might dictate.

On 29 June, the US Ambassador at Vientiane informed the Secretary of State that he agreed with Consul General Martin's suggestion that Phoumi try to convince the King to call a meeting of the Princes. Ambassador Brown doubted, however, that Souvanna and Souphanouvong would flatly refuse a royal invitation. Instead, they probably would call for a postponement.

The Ambassador also warned against counting upon the cooperation of the King. In his opinion, the King would not designate a provisional government unacceptable to the Pathet Lao. "As for Prime Minister," Ambassador Brown concluded, "I am convinced our choice is now Souvanna or military action."

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 295, 28 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2334, 29 Jun 61.

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29 Jun 61 The National Security Council "discussed the Laos situation on the basis of a report by the Secretary of State, supplemented by Ambassador Harriman's summary of current negotiations in Geneva."

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(S) NSC Action No. 2433, 29 Jun 61, in JCS Cont. Div.

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29, 30  
Jun 61

On 29 June Phoumi Nosavan visited Washington to confer with the President and other US officials. In the first day of discussions, Phoumi reiterated his view (see item 23 June 1961) that the RLG had not made important concessions in the formulation of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961). He emphasized again that the final sentence of the communique had placed the entire fate of the country in the hands of the King, but he warned that the King would be reluctant to take action implementing the communique until he knew more precisely what the US would do under various possible future circumstances.

Later on the 29th, the Secretary of State stated frankly to Phoumi current US policy on Laos. The new Administration had not been able, the Secretary stated initially, to change abruptly the earlier US policy that a peaceful solution should be obtained without the commitment of US troops. Not only were US and world public opinion unprepared for such a move, but, more important, the specter of World War III hovered over all policy deliberation on Laos. It was the tragedy of the Lao, the Secretary said, that they were involved at all, where they had no place, in a confrontation of the great powers.

Nonetheless, the Secretary continued, the US was aware that it had undertaken to do its utmost to prevent a Communist takeover, out of quite valid concern for the Lao themselves, for the future of Southeast Asia, and for US world prestige. There were circumstances, then, when the US would find it necessary to commit its own forces to the defense of Lao independence. But it was impossible to state precisely and in advance, as Phoumi apparently wished the US to do, what these circumstances

circumstances would be; this would amount, the Secretary stated, to delegating to the RLG responsibility for the policy and decisions of the US. But some of the RLG's uncertainty in conducting its policies could perhaps, the Secretary suggested, be removed by daily contact between the RLG and US, so that full and frank expressions of thoughts and intentions could continually be had.

The Secretary then renewed his advice (see item 13 May 1961) that the RLG not make premature concessions in its negotiations with the enemy. It was the "historical moment," the Secretary continued, for the King to exercise a greater degree of direct influence. The Lao had great respect for the King, the Secretary knew, and the King might be reluctant to risk the institution of the monarchy; but there were times "when respect could be safeguarded by appropriate actions." Clearly, the Secretary concluded, there would be no place for the King in a Communist Laos. In reply, Phoumi simply said again that the lack of clarity in the US position made action by the King difficult.

On 30 June, in conversation with the President, he tried again to gain definite US commitments for defined circumstances. The President, however, repeated the sentiments of the Secretary of State. Although the US would always be influenced by Phoumi's judgment, the President said, the US must nonetheless evaluate the continuing developments and act in the light of existing circumstances.

(See items 1, 3, and 8 July 1961.)

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(S) MemCons; Phoumi et al. and Under SecState (PA) et al., 29 Jun 61; Phoumi and SecState, 29 Jun 61; Phoumi and Pres, 30 Jun 61. All in OASD (ISA) FER/SEA Br. Files. (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 001, 1 Jul 61.

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Ambassador

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20 Jun 61 Ambassador Gavin reported that Souvanna Phouma had opened their conversation that morning by saying he had "regretfully" decided that, at the present time, he could not accept Ambassador Harriman's invitation to visit Washington (see item 25 June 1961). The principal reason expressed by Souvanna for declining was the lack of time. However, another reason which emerged later in the conversation and which, in Ambassador Gavin's opinion, was probably equally influential in his decision, was Phoumi's presence in Washington; for Souvanna had stated he did not want to give the impression that the fate of Laos was being decided in the United States.

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5803, 30 Jun 61.

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30 Jun 61 Total US economic aid to Laos for the period FY 1955 through 30 June 1961 amounted to almost \$264 million. About 99% of this assistance was in grants from the Mutual Security Program with the small balance coming from relief programs provided for in PL 480. US economic assistance to Laos for Fiscal Years 1955-1961 is shown below:

(Millions of dollars)

Total	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	Total
economic								
grant-aid	40.9	49.5	44.5	31.7	25.5	42.3	32.7	263.9

Of the \$32.7 million in obligations and loan authorizations for 1961, \$30.8 million had been earmarked for "supporting assistance." Of the \$263.9 million seven-year total, \$250 million had been programmed for this same purpose.

The amount programmed for Laos for FY 1961 represented approximately 4% of the US obligations and loan authorizations for the entire Far East region during that year. A comparison of economic aid to Laos from FY 1955 through FY 1961 with the  
program

program for the entire Far East region during those same years discloses that Laos received roughly the same percentage of the over-all total.

According to data prepared by AID for presentation to Congress, almost \$39 million in economic assistance had been programmed for FY 1962; the FY 1963 program was estimated to be about \$40 million.

From FY 1950 through FY 1961, US aid to Laos under the Military Assistance Program reached a cumulative total of \$106.1 million. Of this amount, \$104.5 million was expended. In addition, Laos actually received from excess US stocks items with a total value at acquisition of \$13.9 million.

According to statistics prepared by the Agency for International Development, slightly less than 6% of the military assistance programmed for the Far East region during FY 1961 was scheduled for Laos. From FY 1955 through FY 1961, however, only about 2.3% of the cumulative total for the Far East region was programmed for Laos. Included in these statistics were grants, loans, and other military assistance.

The authorized FY 1961 military assistance program for Laos was \$32.5 million in military aid plus \$2.7 million from excess US stocks without charge to MAP-appropriated funds. According to figures prepared by DOD for submission to Congress, the estimated expenditures and deliveries during FY 1961 were \$46.5 million in military aid along with \$.8 million from excess stocks.

Programmed for FY 1962, as of 4 January of that year, were \$62 million in military aid and \$1.5 million from excess stocks, while \$32.7 million in aid and \$.8 million from excess stocks were proposed for FY 1963.

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In terms of key end-items, MAP aid to Laos, 1950-1962, was broken down as follows:

Items	Programmed			Estimated deliveries and expenditures
	1950-1961	1961	*1962	1950-1961
C-47 aircraft	9	1	1	9
L-19 aircraft	6	2	1	6
L-20 aircraft	9	-	4	9
H-19 & H-34 helicopters	-	9	2	-
Tank, light	5	-	21	5
APC	5	-	-	5
1/4-ton truck	728	30	18	728
3/4-ton truck	449	40	1	449
2 1/2-ton truck	1,251	23	81	1,251
4 to 6-ton truck	26	-	-	26
75 mm rifle	15	6	45	15
105 mm howitzer	27	-	-	27
60 mm mortar	157	87	450	157
81 mm mortar	78	59	44	78
4.2-inch mortar	11	5	-	11
Carbine	24,164	22,719	331	12,764
Rifle	10,819	5,406	7,943	10,819
Cal. 30 machine gun	546	101	220	306
3.5 rocket launcher	110	243	340	110

\*As of 4 January 1962.

Agency for International Development statistics compiled at the close of FY 1961 offered the following information on the finances of the Lao Government:

	(Millions of dollars)		
	1960	1961	1962 (Budget)
Total Expenditures	38.8	41.7	48.7
(Defense Expenditures)	(21.1)	(25.5)	(28.7)
(Capital Outlays)	(2.1)	(2.0)	(2.3)
Domestic Revenues	8.3	5.7	9.7
Budget Receipts from Non-US Foreign Aid	0.5	0.3	0.4
Budget Receipts from US Aid (Grants and Loans)	30.2	32.0	35.3
Remaining Deficit (-) or Surplus (+)	+0.2	-3.7	-3.3

Agency for International Development, (U) "US Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations-July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1961;" (C) "Proposed Regional Programs for Fiscal Year 1963," Vol. IV. Military Assistance Program, (S/NOFORN) "Fiscal Year 1962 Estimates;" (S/NOFORN) "Fiscal Year 1963 Estimates."

Returning

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1 Jul 61 Returning to Laos from the US (see item 29-30 June 1961), Phoumi stopped in Hawaii for a conversation with CINCPAC. Phoumi told CINCPAC that he foresaw two possible results of the next three--Princes' meeting: 1) a coalition in which the PL and Souvanna predominated; or 2) a coalition under the King (which Phoumi claimed the King had already agreed to). If the PL and Souvanna would not accept the latter solution, hostilities might then resume; but the FAL, having improved its training and re-equipped during the cease-fire, was prepared.

Phoumi stated that he had eight Groupements Mobiles (GM) deployed for defense: five south of the Nam Ca Dinh; and three in north Laos - one at Luang Prabang, one at Vientiane, and one in reserve. When hostilities resumed, again Phoumi saw two possible phases of action: the first without Thai and South Vietnamese assistance for the FAL; the second, with. In the first phase, the FAL would hold southern Laos and conduct limited guerrilla actions in the north; Vientiane and Luang Prabang might or might not be held. In the second phase, the Thai and South Vietnamese would occupy southern Laos, freeing the bulk of the FAL for action in the north. If, at this point, the DRV did not reinforce the PL, then the FAL could "manage" the situation in northern Laos. Even if the DRV did send in troops, the FAL formations would offer more effective resistance in the north than would guerrillas.

If hostilities were not resumed and a coalition government was formed, Phoumi continued, he expected a Souvanna-PL effort to reduce anti-Communist strength by reducing the FAL. The Souvanna-PL forces would however, Phoumi said, maintain their own clandestine elements. To counter this, Phoumi was preparing

preparing the formation of a non-Communist clandestine force (see item 2 September 1961).

In conclusion, Phoumi asked for CINCPAC's approval of these plans. CINCPAC did not give his approval, but he did urge Phoumi to start improving his logistics system by appointing a general officer as Chief of Logistics.

(See item 6 July 1961 for CHMAAG's comments on Phoumi's statements and plans. See item 8 July for final comment on Phoumi's impression of the results of his conversations with US officials.)

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 031845Z Jun 61.

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2 Jul 61 Ambassador Galbraith informed the Secretary of State that Indian Foreign Secretary Desai had expressed the opinion that the important thing to consider in a future Lao government was to "build up the center." Instead of balancing so many "left" against so many "right," the policy must be to cut down the number at the extremes and get the maximum number who would build up Souvanna.

Galbraith had also met with Defense Minister Menon who stated that it was "vital to get Laos settled before Vietnam blows." The best next step, he strongly emphasized, was for the US to use its influence in Vientiane and with the King to expedite the formation of a coalition government along the lines of the Zurich protocol. Menon also stated that Souvanna, whatever his merits and demerits, was the "only possibility."

Later in the conversation Menon expressed the opinion that the cease-fire would not be entirely effective prior to the forming of a coalition government and the merging of the

armies

armies; "otherwise one side or the other," and the PL in particular, would not resist the temptation to clean up the pockets.

Galbraith, raising the subject of the ICC, made his "usual point" that in the absence of effective Lao sovereignty, the ICC had to be strong. Menon objected to the use of the word "strong," and substituted "effective." By "effective" Menon meant that the ICC would have "control" of the borders and mobile teams to report on guerrilla or "other" threats to law and order.

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(S) Msgs, New Delhi to SecState, 7, 8, 2 Jul 61.

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3 Jul 61 The Acting Secretary of Defense, replying to, inter alia, a JCS memorandum on the use of nuclear weapons against Communist China (see item 15 June 1961), noted that it had been clear for some time that, as stated by the JCS, US capability in Southeast Asia was adversely affected by inadequacies in logistics, air fields, and lines of communication. The JCS were therefore requested to provide "specific data on the requirements for, and order of magnitude costs of, the logistic, airfield, and communication improvements needed in Southeast Asia" (see item 6 October 1961).

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(TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Jul 61, att to JCS 2118/157, 7 Jul 61; JMF 9150/4000 (3 Jul 61).

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3 Jul 61 Ambassador Harriman, in an hour's conversation in Paris, discussed with Souvanna the integration of Lao forces, the importance of the ICC, Souvanna's candidacy for the office of Prime Minister, the continued French presence in Laos,

and

and other related matters.

The US Ambassador informed the Secretary of State that Souvanna shared the US concern over possible domination by the Pathet Lao of a unified Lao Army. Souvanna believed that precautions in this regard would have to be taken when the factional contingents were integrated (see item 15-17 September 1961).

Ambassador Harriman also reported that he had outlined for Souvanna the US position that a strong and effective ICC could aid Laos in maintaining its neutrality and independence. Souvanna, according to the Ambassador, expressed agreement, stating by way of elaboration that such an ICC would require large numbers of men along with its own helicopters and other means of transportation. Souvanna, however, did not believe that fixed control posts would be effective in a country as large as Laos. Instead, the Prince thought the ICC should be stationed at Vientiane where it could be informed by the Lao Government of matters that might require investigation. Turning to other aspects of the US position, Souvanna stated that an independent ICC, capable of acting without permission from the Lao Government, would be an infringement on Lao sovereignty. He added, however, that the ICC should not be supervised by the Geneva co-Chairmen and that the ICC should police the Laotian elections.

When Souvanna asked if the US was prepared to support his candidacy for the office of Prime Minister, Ambassador Harriman declined to make a direct reply, stating instead that the US was concerned about the role of the Pathet Lao in his proposed government and the type of men he would include in his cabinet. Souvanna thereupon observed that possibly Souphanouvong might not be included in the government. As

examples

examples of good men, Souvanna listed Quinim Pholsena, Sissamang Sisalemqak, Khamsouk Keoula, and Pheng Phongsavan, all of whom Harriman understood to have been "considered pretty close to the Pathet Lao."

Concerning the continued French presence, Souvanna said that the status of the Seno base would have to be altered but that the general provisions of the 1954 accord could be maintained with some modifications.

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(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 22, 3 Jul 61.

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3, 5  
Jul 61

Ambassador Brown travelled to Luang Prabang to inform the King of the course of Phoumi's discussions in Washington (see item 29, 30 June 1961). Expanding upon the Secretary's exhortation to Phoumi that the King take an active part in the formation of a coalition government, Brown urged that the King invite the three parties to confer in Luang Prabang, so that he could exercise his great influence toward the formation of an acceptable government. Otherwise, Brown feared, Souvanna and Souphanouvong would attempt to extract concessions from the RLG and then come to Luang Prabang and present the King with a fait accompli.

The King did not accede to Brown's request, however, stating that, to the Laotian mind, such an invitation to Souvanna and Souphanouvong would confer great status upon them. In view of this factor, the King said, he would have to consider Brown's recommendation very carefully.

At another place in the course of this conversation with Ambassador Brown, the King emphasized the value of local aid projects in securing the loyalty of Lao people; he attributed much of the past success of the Pathet Lao

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to their skillful use of such tools. Ambassador Brown agreed, and the Department of State reacted, on 5 July, by asking Brown for a Country Team report on further nonmilitary aid efforts that could usefully be undertaken in Laos (see item 21 July 1961).

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 005, 3 Jul 61; 008, 4 Jul 61; SecState to Vientiane, 020, 5 Jul 61.

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3, 7  
Jul 61

US-French conversations on the continuation of the French military presence in Laos took place in both Washington and Paris. On 3 July, French Counselor Winckler called at the request of the Department of State to confer with the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. During the discussion, Assistant Secretary McConaughy informed the French diplomat that the US believed "the French role might well be decisive in retaining Western influence after a Geneva settlement" and then posed seven questions previously prepared by the Department of State. Although Counselor Winckler did not attempt to answer the questions, agreeing instead to refer them to Paris, he did state that maintaining a French military mission would be "difficult 'even with Souvanna.'"

Also on 3 July, Ambassadors Harriman and Gavin called upon the French Foreign Minister in Paris. The US diplomats were told, among other things, that Souvanna had accepted the continuation of the French military presence in Laos. The French Foreign Minister also agreed that in Geneva the West should take a strong position, insisting upon adequate authority and equipment for the ICC and upon enforcement of the cease-fire. He further believed that the West should be firm in negotiations regarding the long-term authority of the

ICC

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ICC but doubted that much progress could be made on this matter until a coalition government had been agreed upon. Finally, the Foreign Minister, after agreeing to use French influence with Souvanna "in an attempt to pull him out of Communistic clutches," made it clear to the Americans that he believed "Souvanna's Prime Ministership was the only course open."

As a result of the 3 July discussion in Paris, Ambassador Gavin on 7 July called upon the Director, Asian Affairs, of the French Foreign Office. This conversation dealt with the questions (see item 20 June 1961) prepared by the Department of State in order to determine French plans for continuing the military mission to Laos. These questions, according to Ambassador Gavin, were answered as follows:

1) Composition and mission of Lao forces. The Director, Asian Affairs, tentatively favored an "army of gendarmerie type to be exclusively for internal security purposes."

2) Type of training. This was considered a "'technical-administrative problem,'" involving the establishment of confidence in the army, the abolition of corruption, the establishment of a network of training posts, and a consideration for the rights of minority groups. It was considered obvious, however, that the reconstituted army should be lightly armed, mobile, and trained in anti-guerrilla operations.

3) The type and size of the mission. Although an increase in both funds and personnel had been approved even before the outbreak of the Laotian civil war, the exact type and size of the mission was not yet decided.

4) The type of equipment for Lao forces. This problem remained to be studied.

5) The

5) The financing of the mission. This subject, too, remained to be studied, although it already was recognized that close cooperation with the US would be necessary.

6) The potential capability of Lao troops and officers. The Director, Asian Affairs, regarded Lao soldiers "as 'not bad' if well-officered," but he was "a bit skeptical regarding the war-like qualities of the Lao people." He believed that the future capability of Lao officers and men would "depend to a great extent on their political appreciation of the role they are playing."

7) The prevention of Communist subversion. Although the Director, Asian Affairs, recognized that this was a serious problem, he admitted that further study would be necessary.

(On 24 July, after the Foreign Minister had told the French National Assembly that France was willing to continue military assistance to Laos, an official of the American Embassy approached the Director, Asian Affairs, for further details concerning the military mission and the reconstituted Lao Army. The US diplomat was told that "no firm conclusions have as yet been reached as the situation at Geneva is still too tenuous." The Director, Asian Affairs, also expressed apprehension that the Geneva Conference ultimately would decide that "membership in SEATO and the provision of military training by a SEATO member were incompatible with Lao neutrality.")

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(S) Msg, State to Paris, 67, 5 Jul 61; (S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 7, 3 Jul 61; 92, 7 Jul 61; 404, 25 Jul 61.

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5 Jul 61 Special National Intelligence Estimate 58-2-61, prepared at the behest of the Department of State, addressed the following two problems:

1. The



1. The consequences for South Viet Nam and Southeast Asia of predominately Communist control of southern Laos. The fall of southern Laos would radically increase the difficulties of the non-Communist position in Southeast Asia generally and South Viet Nam particularly. But in both cases, the fall of southern Laos would not of itself open the way to eventual Communist domination. The nature and amount of US support and the future internal and external actions of the respective governments would, in the long term, be the primary determinants of the future of the area.

2. The consequences of the following courses of action:

Course A: A coordinated South Vietnamese-Thai-RLG military action, beginning gradually and on a small scale, designed to secure the Savannakhet-Tchepone-Lao Bao line (Route 9) and extending eventually to a cleanup of southern Laos.

Course B: In conjunction with Course A, temporary US occupation of Vientiane, Thakhek, and Savannakhet, together with coordinated actions by Thai, Lao, and Meo troops in the Mekong Valley and northern Laos.

The Communists would probably contest Course A with whatever force they deemed necessary to resist it, including unacknowledged DRV forces. They would probably announce that the non-Communists had broken the cease-fire, and would probably resume military operations throughout Laos. If this initial response did not succeed, they would probably further expand operations and attempt seizure of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and other key points; DRV regulars might at this point be overtly committed. Meanwhile, the DRV would continue to infiltrate South Viet Nam through Laos but probably would not, for fear of large-scale US counteraction, openly attack

South

South Viet Nam. Chinese Communist forces would not be introduced into either Laos or South Viet Nam at this stage.

Against Course B, the PL, supported by the Bloc, would probably attempt to confine US and allied control to the population centers, harassing supply lines and engaging in terrorism and sabotage, and attempt to destroy RLG control elsewhere. Dependent upon the size and apparent intent of the US interventions, the DRV might be overtly introduced, but DRV troops would, at least initially, avoid direct engagement with US forces. If, however, Communist-controlled Laos were threatened during extended US-PL clashes, then direct US-DRV engagement would probably result. The Chinese Communists might possibly intervene in this circumstance and would almost certainly do so if the DRV were threatened with defeat.

The RLG, for its part, would be reluctant to accede to Course A unless US forces also participated. They would recognize that Course A implied surrender of northern Laos and failed still to guarantee that the US would intervene to save the RLG. Phoumi, moreover, would realize that acceptance of this course would destroy his hopes for a political future in any neutralist Laotian government. Nevertheless, with sufficient US urging, the RLG would probably accept Course A. In so urging, the US should, however, recognize that the failure of Course A would bring about a "considerable chance" that RLG resistance to Communist pressures would evaporate. The RLG leaders would strongly prefer that Courses A and B be undertaken concurrently; most of them would welcome Course B.

The Thai and South Vietnamese would also welcome Course B. The latter would also agree without hesitation to Course A, but the Thai would agree only reluctantly to a course that benefited only South Viet Nam, leaving Thailand open to Communist retaliation. Of the SEATO members, France would

would most strongly oppose both courses. The UK would also oppose, at least while the Geneva Conference continued, and the remainder of the SEATO nations would applaud. Among the Asian states, India, Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya would almost certainly criticize either course, but the Nationalist Chinese would support either.

The Sino-Soviet Bloc would be likely to consider either course as "not vital to their own interests." They would believe themselves able to deny the US its objectives and would consequently probably leave to the US any decision to expand hostilities. There would be in the envisaged allied actions, however, constant danger of expansion. US threats to launch air attacks on North Viet Nam would probably not be taken seriously, unless there were evidences that the US was preparing a major military effort in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, an actual US air attack would provoke a strong Bloc response and "an entirely new crisis situation," which--the possibility could not be ruled out--the Chinese might consider a major threat to their security and which, consequently, might bring about major Chinese military action in Laos or elsewhere.

The envisaged courses of action could not, the SNIE continued, effectively curtail Communist infiltration of South Viet Nam; only a "major military operation" involving substantial South Vietnamese and possibly US forces could achieve this objective. The planned Thai, South Vietnamese, and Lao forces could hinder but not curtail the infiltration. Furthermore, neither action would solve the problem of Viet Cong success in recruiting the majority of their strength locally in South Viet Nam.

Course

Course A in its initial inconspicuous phase would probably have little effect on the Geneva Conference. Course B or the advanced stages of Course A might cause the Communist to withdraw from the Conference; more likely, however, they would continue to sit, using the Conference as a platform for castigating the US. Neither course would, the SNIE concluded, exert significant pressure toward making the Communists more reasonable at the conference table.

Neither, finally, would the status of the Geneva negotiations have great bearing on Communist responses in Laos. The situation in Laos and world reaction to the US-backed actions would play far greater part in Communist decisions.

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(TS) SNIE 58-2-61, 5 Jul 61; J-2 Secretariat.

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6 Jul 61 The Indian Ambassador in Laos, Ratnam, informed Ambassador Brown that, during a meeting with Boun Oum, the Laotian leader had said that if negotiations either between the three Princes or at Geneva broke down, the best solution would be to partition Laos. This could be done, Boun Oum was reported to have said, by either drawing a line across the narrow neck of the kingdom, thereby holding only the southern part of Laos, or by drawing a line roughly down the middle of the country along the approximate boundary between areas controlled by the two sides.

Ratnam also reported that the last time he had seen Souphanouvong in Xieng Khouang, the latter had declared that partition was one thing that he would "absolutely fight to prevent."

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 19, 6 Jul 61.

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6 Jul 61 The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a letter to the Secretary of State, asked if it were "possible to maintain . . . , from Iran to northern Japan, positions of strength that require a tremendous effort at a time when the American atomic monopoly no longer exists." This, he continued, was in essence the subject of all past French-US discussions on Laos. Apart from intervention by the Chinese Communists, in which case military intervention by the West would be immediately necessary and justified, France believed that the West's efforts should be limited to political, cultural, and economic means with the least possible interference with a nation's internal policies. It was in this spirit that France remained in Laos, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam, and France believed it would in the long run exert a considerable influence by such means. Thus, France was willing to accept the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia, if not of South Viet Nam, which constituted a special case.

In the opinion of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the partition of Laos was out of the question, for the Communists would not accept it. Since no agreement could be reached at Geneva unless a single Lao Government was formed, the West should make the best of a bad situation by promoting a unified government headed by Souvanna.

The chief difficulty at Geneva, the Minister of Foreign Affairs predicted, would be the competence and powers of the ICC. In this regard, he expressed his belief that a continuation of the French presence in Laos would provide a more effective guarantee for the West than would a continuation of an ICC upon which Poland, India, and Canada were represented.

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(S) Ltr, French Minister of Foreign Affairs to SecState,  
6 Jul 61, OASD (ISA), FER/SEA Branch file.

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6 Jul 61 At CINCPAC's request, CHMAAG Laos commented upon the statements and plans advanced to CINCPAC by Phoumi on 1 July (see item). CHMAAG considered that, on the whole, Phoumi's comments had been "misleading and over optimistic," if applied to the current situation or the immediate future. "Not by any stretch of the imagination," CHMAAG said, was the FAL adequately trained or capably led. The effectiveness of Phoumi's eight GM would be "practically negated" by poor leadership unless they were cadred from outside sources. In the matter of equipment, there were still general deficiencies in crew-served weapons, and a poor logistics system. (CHMAAG concurred in CINCPAC's suggestion to Phoumi that a general officer be appointed Chief of Logistics.) Furthermore, Phoumi's artillery was not as well prepared as the Laotian had intimated, and his Savannakhet airfield was suitable for heavy aircraft only during the dry season.

Concerning Phoumi's concept of operations, CHMAAG felt that the FAL unassisted could probably hold the area south of the Nam Ca Dinh against the PL-Souvanna forces, as Phoumi planned, but the introduction of Viet Minh forces would immediately render this capability questionable. Regarding Phoumi's plans for defense of the north, with Thai and South Vietnamese forces holding the South, CHMAAG said, there was no indication that the FAL would be any more effective than it had been in the past. And Phoumi's clandestine army, planned for use after a coalition government was in office, remained a very nebulous concept (see item 5 September 1961).

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 128621, 7 Jul 61.

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7 Jul 61 The Chairman, JCS, in response to a request made at the 29 June NSC meeting (see item), furnished to the President an estimate of the current capabilities of the FAL. Following closely in substance and language a CHMAAG report of 1 July, the Chairman evaluated the FAL as follows:

1. At the time of the cease-fire, it had been estimated that the enemy could advance against the FAL on any front without encountering effective resistance. Although progress had since been made in the manning, equipping, and training of the FAL, deficiencies still existed in leadership, supply, and morale; furthermore, the enemy was also improving his capability. Thus, the FAL, without outside military assistance could not yet offer more than a delaying action to an enemy attack.

2. The MAAG had initiated, since the cease-fire, an intensive training program. To date, one infantry battalion had completed six weeks of unit training in Thailand, and two battalions were undergoing this training; three artillery batteries had converted from French to US techniques, and a fourth was now undergoing this transition; and 13 Lao pilots were training in Thailand, with an additional 15 scheduled to commence training on 1 September. In addition to these formal training courses, tactical training of deployed units was being conducted wherever possible. Some improvement in "basic soldiering," NCO leadership, unit positioning and tactical proficiency, and individual equipment maintenance had resulted. However, officer and NCO schooling, as well as specialist training, had been neglected because the

Ministry

Ministry of National Security, citing the pressure of other commitments, refused to approve such programs.

3. The status of supplies had improved since the cease-fire. Equipment, however, remained in "fair to poor" condition; and the FAL maintenance capability was improving but slowly, because of insufficient trainees, low technical ability, and language difficulties. There remained, therefore, an "excessive" backlog of equipment in need of maintenance.

4. The most notable FAL improvement had occurred in intelligence. The organization of the FAL intelligence activities had been overhauled, and a Royal Lao Military Intelligence School had been established and regional intelligence schools were being organized to train officers and specialists.

5. In summary, the FAL was not yet an effective fighting force. Correction of the basic deficiencies of leadership and motivation were prerequisite to the attainment of effectiveness. The improvement of FAL capability would be "an uphill battle for some time to come."

(See item 8 July 1961.)

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(TS) Memo, CJCS to Pres, 7 Jul 61; OJCS Files, 091 Laos (3); (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 127376, 2 Jul 61.

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8 Jul 61 In a conversation with CHMAAG Laos, Phoumi recounted his version of his recent conversations with US officials (see items 29, 30 June and 1 July 1961). Phoumi had found in these conversations, CHMAAG reported, assurance that, if hostilities were resumed, the US would intervene to maintain his military posture. By Phoumi's account, ("allegations was CHMAAG's word) he had told US officials that the peaceful solution



solution to the Lao problem advocated by the West would not succeed and that the US should be prepared for the resumption of hostilities in the near future. Further, Phoumi reported he had told the JCS and CINCPAC that Laos was entering a new phase which would entail extensive preparation for eventual military action against the Communists; at the same time negotiations would be continued "as far as possible." Everyone, Phoumi said, had agreed with him, and everyone, including the President, had assured him that no more concessions would be made to the Communists. Moreover, the US had assured him that, after the formation of a coalition government, the US would support the FAL at its present size for the foreseeable future.

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(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 129403, 10 Jul 6

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8 Jul 61 In a message to CINCPAC, the CJCS termed the improvements in the FAL, as he had assessed them for the President (see item 7 July 1961), both "heartening," and "discouraging." Although tactical training and intelligence capability seemed to be progressing satisfactorily, FAL efforts in improving leadership, motivation, specialist training, and logistics were "too meager and too slow." The FAL must be convinced, CJCS said, of the importance of initiating leadership schools "right now." Moreover, the unwillingness or disinterestedness, whichever the case, of the FAL to undertake reconnaissance and combat patrols must be overcome.

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 998718, 8 Jul 61.

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10 Jul 61 At Ban Namone, Souvanna's representative introduced draft truce regulations designed to prevent the troops of all

factions

factions from advancing beyond the positions held on 3 May 1961. The draft regulations, when adopted, would: 1) forbid troop concentrations near the stabilized front; 2) ground military aircraft and prevent all aerial intrusions into territory held by the opposing faction; 3) forbid the movement of guerrillas, weapons, and supplies across the front; and 4) force withdrawals by both sides in areas where large numbers of troops were in contact.

Enforcement of the truce was made the responsibility of a tripartite joint committee which would establish joint subcommittees on the various battle fields. The committee would be assisted by the ICC, but the international organization was to "tend to respect the principle of sovereignty and the independence of Laos." In the event of a truce violation, the committee could call upon the ICC to send a mobile investigation team to the area involved. Routine investigations, however, were to be conducted by the joint committee and its subordinate elements (see item 7-13 September 1961).

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(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 49, 11 Jul 61.

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11 Jul 61 During a meeting of the Laos Task Force at the Department of State, U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, stated that General Maxwell D. Taylor had visited him and discussed certain courses of action that could be undertaken in Laos short of implementing SEATO Plan 5. Mr. Johnson then listed these following courses of action:

1) 

2) A modified Plan 5 utilizing, predominately, Southeast Asians and very few US troops.

3) A

3) 

4) An operation similar to SEATO Plan 5 confined to the "Panhandle" of Laos.

5) Developing a base from which to apply military pressure on North Viet Nam, using Viet Cong aggression in SVN as a justification for this action.

Mr. Johnson desired the task force to initiate planning for these actions, but at the suggestion of the JCS representative, Deputy Director, J-3, he agreed to postpone this undertaking until General Taylor had discussed the subject with the JCS.

On the same day, presumably in connection with the foregoing, the Director, Joint Staff, requested that J-5 prepare an outline plan that would, in the event the US found it necessary to accept a geographical division of Laos, accomplish the following objectives:

1. Control over a suitable area in the Mekong Valley and Southern Laos in order to protect Thailand and South Viet Nam from conventional attack or guerrilla penetration from northern Laos or North Viet Nam.

2. Offensive air and guerrilla operations from this secure base against northern Laos and North Viet Nam.

3. Maintaining a threat of naval surface operations against North Viet Nam.



(See items 20 July, 7 and 17 August 1961.)

General

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(S) DepDir, J-3 Memo for Record, 12 Jul 61, on file with Deputy Director for Operations. (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2339/11, 3 Aug 61; JMF 9150/3100 (13 May 61).

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11 Jul 61 General Phoumi, reporting on the Zurich negotiations at a National Assembly meeting, reaffirmed the RLG position that any new Lao government would have to be formed in accordance with the constitution, and would require the approval of both the National Assembly and the King's Council.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 48, 11 Jul 61.

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11-13  
Jul 61

The US delegation at the Geneva Conference, after informal discussions with the French, British, and Canadian delegations recommended on 11 July that the Department of State "stimulate an offer from the RLG of a "significant quantity of essential equipment for exclusive use by the ICC without restriction as to the territory in which it might be used or the mission in which it might be employed."

On 13 July, the US Consul General in Geneva listed for the Secretary of State certain features that he considered "important to the success of the RLG offer of equipment." The "purpose of the offer" remained "to sharpen" the access issue by making it clear that the ICC would be sufficiently independent to "carry out inspections requested by either side." To accomplish this purpose the RLG proposal should insure that: 1) the transportation and communications equipment would be adequate to enable full teams to visit any part of Laos; 2) the equipment would be made available as soon as the ICC was willing to accept it; 3) the US would provide the RLG with either the articles themselves or with replacements, so that the "US or RLG capability to

support

support the FAL" was not weakened; and 4) the US through the RLG would assist in painting, operating, and maintaining the equipment.

In anticipation of a request based on the 11 July message from Geneva, the US Ambassador in Vientiane on 13 July forwarded to the Secretary of State a draft text which the RLG could use as the basis for its formal offer to release supplies and equipment to the ICC. The draft, which the Secretary of State on 13 July approved with only slight modifications of language, imposed no restrictions on the Commission's use of the equipment (see item 19 July 1961).

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 52, 12 Jul 61; Geneva to SecState, CONF 362, 11 Jul 61; CONF 374, 13 Jul 61; State to Vientiane, NIACT 39, 13 Jul 61.

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12 Jul 61 In an informal meeting in Geneva, US Ambassador Harriman agreed in principle to a compromise suggested by Soviet co-Chairman Pushkin. According to the terms of this compromise, the declaration of neutrality and the protocol on controls would be considered as a single entity, the discussion of neutrality would be followed by a discussion of the protocol, and debate on any one provision in either the declaration or the protocol would be limited to a single day. Thus, the Conference would not be stalled by early disagreements and yet would be able to return at a later date to unresolved issues.

(The Secretary of State on 14 July approved Ambassador Harriman's action and instructed him to arrange the details using his own discretion. The Ambassador, however, was to make certain that the final agreement on procedure did not "preclude the handling of the ICC equipment and access

issue

issue in the relatively near future.")

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 365, 12 Jul 61;  
State to Geneva, FECON NIACT 253, 14 Jul 61.

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12 Jul 61 The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek a US governmental decision that, "upon the next occurrence of a proven Communist violation of the cease fire," the US would:

a. Withdraw its delegation from the Geneva Conference on Laos.

b. Undertake military operations in Laos through SEATO, or with those SEATO members prepared to participate, or, if necessary, unilaterally. The objective of military action would be to achieve the necessary military position to permit successful political negotiation for a unified independent and neutral Laos.

The US had agreed to participate in the Geneva Conference, the JCS said, subject to the establishment of an effective cease-fire. Such a cease-fire had not been achieved - as the fall of Padong (see item 7 June 1961), the attack on outposts near Hat Bo (see item 12 June 1961), and the capture of villages near Paksane testified; yet the US was participating in the Conference. Moreover, said the Chiefs, "it would appear that US determination not to walk out of the Conference is dominating all other considerations." During the Conference the US negotiating position had been weakened. US policies were diluted both in the drafting of tripartite papers with the UK and France and in the 14-nation forum. Examples of this weakening were the US acquiescence in the procedures for seating Laotian delegations and the US decision to begin substantive discussions without an effective cease-fire. If present trends in Geneva and Laos continued, the Chiefs said, the outcome would be "a Laos more Communist than neutral"

neutral" --another serious blow to US prestige.

"Continued political retreat by the United States in the face of Communist challenges will surely immobilize the national will of those nations who have allied themselves with us," the JCS said, "and it may induce many to seek an accommodation with Communism." Already in Southeast Asia there were indications that Thailand and the Philippines were considering moving toward neutralism. And the Asian SEATO members generally failed to understand and took as a sign of weakness the continued US failure, particularly since August 1960, to "exercise active leadership of SEATO."

"Credibility in the US deterrent is waning," continued the JCS. "The challenge has been made in Southeast Asia. Khrushchev has indicated Berlin may be next." If the US took a stand in Laos, the dangers of escalation could not be avoided, but they would be less for Laos, in any event, than during a more direct confrontation with the USSR over Berlin. A firm political and military position could be taken in Laos without serious effect upon general war posture and could enhance the credibility of US determination to use its military force wherever needed to protect its interests.

The Padong incident had provided an occasion of short duration wherein the US would have been justified in sending in troops. It was highly probable, given the past Communist pattern in Laos, that such an opportunity would present itself again. The US should at that time be prepared to respond immediately in the manner recommended by the JCS.

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(TS) JCSM-460-61 to SecDef, 12 Jul 61, derived from JCS 2344/1, 27 Jun 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (24 Jun 61).

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12 Jul 61 The daily Joint Staff Intelligence Brief estimated pro-Communist forces in Laos to number 22,500. Of this number, approximately 7,000 were responsive to Souvanna/Kong Le, 14,000 were Pathet Lao, and 1,500 were Viet Minh advisers and technicians.

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(S) JSIB, 12 Jul 61.

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14 Jul 61 Indian Defense Minister Krishna Menon, in what the US Consul General at Geneva termed "a typically disorganized presentation," placed before the Geneva Conference a draft protocol dealing with ICC machinery. The Indian draft, according to the Consul General, contained these salient features:

1. Responsibility for implementing the cease-fire would be placed on the parties. The draft also placed "great emphasis, in general, on the cooperation of the Lao Government."
2. The Lao Government would be empowered to veto ICC investigations.
3. The withdrawal of foreign personnel and the re-introduction of foreign troops or equipment were, from the US point of view, given satisfactory coverage.
4. French military training contingents would be permitted to remain "on the basis of Lao-French bilateral agreement." France, however, could not delegate its training functions to any other nation except Laos.
5. The question of majority voting in the ICC was avoided.
6. Only the nationals of India, Canada, Poland, and Laos would be eligible to serve with the ICC.

7. The



7. The ICC was to have control over its personnel and equipment.

8. ICC expenses were to be shared according to a formula that incorporated the principles governing contributions toward UN expenses.

In elaborating upon the Indian draft, Mr. Menon referred to the problem of ICC equipment (see item 15 June 1961), noting that the RLG had offered generous support (see item 11-13 July 1961) and the "other side had given token assistance." The equipment issue, the Defense Minister was reported as saying, "would have been settled by the commissioners on the spot if it had not been raised 'to a high level of controversy here.'"

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 392, 15 Jul 61.

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14, 15  
Jul 61

On 14 July Ambassador Brown reported that Ambassador Morsky, the Polish ICC representative, had told the British Ambassador in Vientiane, Addis, that the partition of Laos "would mean war and not just a local war." On the following day Brown reported that Indian Ambassador Ratnam had told the Australian military attache that, if the partition of Laos should be proposed, the Soviets would withdraw from the Lao scene and give the Chinese Communists and North Vietnamese the "green light" to take any action they chose, and "continue to supply them in so doing." The Australian expressed the opinion that Ratnam's source had been the Indian Embassy in Moscow.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 69, 14 Jul 61; 72, 15 Jul 61.

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Responding

16 Jul 61 Responding to Boun Oum's 7 July invitation to meet at Luang Prabang to resume discussions on the formation of a coalition government, Souvanna cabled from Paris that because of his health, he would prefer Phnom Penh as a meeting place (see item 5 August 1961).

(On 18 July, Boun Oum transmitted a cable to Souvanna, informing him that his proposal had been accepted.)

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(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 27, 7 Jul 61; 102, 19 Jul 61.

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17 Jul 61 Ambassador Brown reported on the conflicting impressions that Australian Minister Morris and the British Ambassador had received from their recent respective conversations with Phoumi. To Addis, Phoumi had presented a picture of reasonableness, of pressing ahead "of" negotiations on all fronts in good faith, and of reasonable optimism regarding a satisfactory political solution.

On the other hand, Morris had received the impression that Phoumi was dissatisfied with negotiations and despondent about their prospects. Phoumi was going through an exercise which might work, but Phoumi doubted it. According to Morris, Phoumi had said flatly that he had been "'forced into these negotiations by the Americans.'" Morris also said that Phoumi had stated that he had been making good use of time afforded by the negotiations. "'We are no longer in position in which we have to surrender and the other side knows it'," the Laotian General had declared.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 82, 17 Jul 61.

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17 Jul 61 In a message to US diplomatic posts, the Secretary of State, noting the "wide-spread expressions of disillusionment with SEATO."

SEATO," instructed US representatives to attempt to counterbalance such sentiments by emphasizing SEATO's continuing strengths. The US continued to regard SEATO as a necessary and effective instrument of US and free world policy, the Secretary said. SEATO had posed and did pose an important deterrent to overt Communist aggression. That the US and other SEATO members had chosen to seek their objective in Laos by negotiation did not imply that they had excluded the possibility of military action should the need arise. Moreover, SEATO continued to afford an organized basis for military planning and a forum for the exchange of views. The notion that the US was encouraging the formation of an "Asian Neutral Belt" was false, the Secretary concluded; rather, the hope of the US was that the nations in the area would develop "indigenous sources of strength and cohesion" in an association determined and able to defend itself against Communism.

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(S) Msg, SecState CIRC, CA-49, 17 Jul 61.

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18 Jul 61 After surveying the situation in Laos since the three-Princes meeting in Zurich, Ambassador Brown told Secretary Rusk he had come to the conclusion that despite some "apparent" agreement there, the real current trend within Laos was toward a greater "polarization" of forces.

Souvanna and the Pathet Lao were insisting on Souvanna as Prime Minister with the bulk of portfolios in the coalition government for, at best, Souvanna's supporters and, at worst, the Pathet Lao. The PL were steadily building up their supplies, training forces, propagandizing the population, and otherwise consolidating their position in

areas

areas under their control. These factors, in Brown's opinion, clearly indicated the PL's determination that they were "here to stay."

On the other hand, Phoumi had returned from Washington "vastly encouraged," and with the feeling that the US was now prepared to back him militarily. The Laotian General was reorganizing his forces and had definite military plans (see item 1 July 1961). Consequently, said the US Ambassador Phoumi intended to take a "stiff" position in negotiations with the two Princes--negotiations for which he had little enthusiasm and in which, Phoumi had more than once stated, he had been "'forced'" to participate by the United States.

Phoumi, Brown continued, might make a genuine effort to obtain approval, both by the King and by the Souvanna and PL factions, for his proposal that the King be Prime Minister or "presiding officer" of a new government. Even if this "King's gambit" failed, Brown said, Phoumi would not support Souvanna as Prime Minister. According to Brown, Phoumi felt that Souvanna was "unretrievably" lost to the Communists, and the men upon whom Souvanna relied as neutralists were in fact either too weak to exert a moderating influence or already were under Communist control. Therefore, Phoumi did not think that a government under Souvanna could offer a "reasonable" prospect for an independent, united, and neutral Laos. Equally important, Brown said, was Phoumi's belief that even if a coalition government, more predominantly neutral than he considered possible, were formed, it could not survive

under

under the present "imbalance of psychological antimilitary forces" in Laos. Phoumi saw no real hope that the Geneva Conference or the ICC would be able to establish, by control measures, an effective deterrent to Communist control. Since the US had told the Laotian General "categorically" that it would not accept a government which might lead to Communist control of Laos, Phoumi had concluded that he could count on US support in the military action which, in his opinion, would almost certainly be required.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 92, 18 Jul 61.

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18 Jul 61 Australian Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs Menzies, in a message to the Secretary of State, stated that a "firm" Western and RLG attitude would be necessary to hold the Communists to the cease-fire, compel them to negotiate seriously, and thus achieve a "genuine neutralization" of Laos. Signs of weakness, particularly unmatched concessions, would only increase the Communist unwillingness to make concessions, Menzies said. The West should therefore insist at Geneva upon a logistically independent ICC, unhampered by a co-Chairman's veto or a requirement for unanimity; and the RLG should make no concession at Ban Namone until "real progress" had been made on this issue.

If the Communists refused to concede a strong ICC, then the Geneva negotiations might collapse upon the initiative of either side. In Laos, either hostilities would resume or the present uneasy military truce might continue. Even in the latter case, said the Australian, Western aid to the RLG would have to increase, to counter Communist subversion.

The more serious danger of a resumed PL offensive might be forestalled, Menzies suggested, by introduction into

Laos

Laos of a set of international observers other than the ICC, or of the UN Peace Observation Commission. And if, after all, the PL did resume the offensive, Menzies questioned whether the planned Western response took proper account of a situation in which "negotiation has broken down after many weeks of complete intransigence by the Communists [and the] Pathet Lao have consolidated their position over the greater part of Laos."

Against this background, Menzies concluded, the Australian Chiefs of Staff were studying SEATO military plans, directing particular scrutiny upon the "bridgehead" concept of SEATO Plan 5 (see item 6 October 1961).

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 999504, 24 Jul 61.

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18-25  
Jul 61

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The JCS on 18 July recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the B-26 and RB-26 aircraft stationed in Thailand [REDACTED] since April (see items 9 March, 4 and 6 April 1961) be removed from that country. According to CHJUSMAG Thailand, the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) needed Takhlī airfield, where the US aircraft were stationed. Furthermore, the JCS considered, as did CINCPAC, that "the requirement for the employment of B-26 aircraft as a part of an over-all effort in Laos no longer exists."

On 24 July, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) presented the above facts and views to the Department of State. He stated that, if the Department of State did not object, the aircraft would be redeployed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] On the next day the Department of State informed the US Ambassador in Thailand that the removal of the B-26s had been approved.

A return

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A return message of the same day indicated that Sarit also agreed.

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(TS) JCSM-481-61 to SecDef, 18 Jul 61, derived from JCS 2350, 18 Jul 61; (S) 1st N/H of JCS 2350, 26 Jul 61; JMF 9158/3440 (5 Jul 61). (TS) Msgs, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CNO (for CINCPAC) 130800Z Jun 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 292311Z Jun 61.

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19 Jul 61 The US Ambassador in Paris called upon Souvanna and, in a brief conversation, discussed with him the Americans missing in Laos, the role of the ICC, the Harriman-Pushkin compromise (see item 12 July 1961), the Prince's talk with Ambassador Harriman (see item 3 July 1961), and a possible visit by Souvanna to the US (see item 25 June 1961).

Concerning the missing Americans and Ambassador Gavin's request for their release or, at least, information on their condition, Souvanna said he would look into the matter when he returned to Laos.

Souvanna then stated that he preferred that the Laotian Government play a dominant role in the operations of the ICC. He indicated that the Laotians should be able either to initiate ICC investigations or to approve those proposed by the Commission and its members.

The Prince appeared uninformed about the Harriman-Pushkin compromise but "said he was pleased to hear about it."

Souvanna also expressed a desire to remain in contact with Ambassador Harriman.

When Ambassador Gavin voiced the hope that Souvanna would visit the US after the new government had been formed, the Prince replied that he would not fail to do so.

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 291, 19 Jul 61.

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19 Jul 61 The US Ambassador in Vientiane, in a message to the Secretary of State, requested comment upon his own proposal that he outline for Phoumi the reasons (see item 27 June 1961) why the US had entered into discussions with France concerning the future of the French Military Mission in Laos. If he did not explain the value of the talks, which were believed "progressing into the area of specifics," Phoumi might learn of the conversations from "other sources" and react with accusations of US double-dealing.

In addition, the Ambassador believed that Phoumi might interpret the US interest in continuation of the French presence "as amounting to direct US support for a French-backed Souvanna Phouma government." Because of the past "mutual antipathy between him and the French," Phoumi might then attempt the partition of the Kingdom, "aided as he would hope by the Thais and South Vietnamese."

(On the following day Secretary Rusk replied that the RLG was aware of the reasons why the US was interested in continuing the French military presence. Nevertheless, because of the risk of an attempt at partition, the US Ambassador in Vientiane was instructed to avoid giving the impression that the US-French talks dealt with specific matters. In fact, said the Secretary, the discussions merely represented an effort to "explore French thinking regarding their possible future role and their determination to fulfill such a role satisfactorily."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 96, 19 Jul 61; (S) Msg, State to Vientiane, PRIORITY 77, 20 Jul 61.

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19 Jul 61 The RLG delegate, Phoui Sananikone, called the attention of the Geneva Conference to his government's recent offer of equipment

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equipment for the ICC. Ambassador Harriman pointed out that the RLG, unlike Souvanna's faction, had neither restricted the use of the equipment to its own territory nor demanded that the ICC obtain its permission before using the equipment to make inspections. The US Ambassador expressed confidence that the ICC not only would accept the RLG offer but would "prevail upon the Xieng Khouang representative to modify theirs accordingly." He also stated that the US-French offer (see item 15 June 1961) remained open. [Inexplicably, up to 11 June 1962, the whole question of ICC equipment apparently has not been raised again at the intergovernmental level.]

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(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 421, 20 Jul 61.

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20 Jul 61 In response to a JCS message of 14 July, CINCPAC commented upon the "outline plan for Laos" under development within the Joint Staff (see item 11 July 1961). First of all, CINCPAC stated that the plan's objective of controlling areas of "maximum contribution" to the defense of Southeast Asia contradicted the assumption of the JCS message that the geographical division of Laos would "generally coincide" with areas presently held by the PL and RLG. The "military fact of life," CINCPAC said, was that the PL presently controlled the key access routes to Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, CINCPAC continued, if the JCS plan was to provide participation by only US, Thai, South Vietnamese, and Lao forces, and was therefore to be a plan "separate and distinct from" SEATO Plan 5, it would "virtually destroy" SEATO. If the FAL was to be assisted in controlling its area in a divided Laos, CINCPAC said, the operation should be undertaken

undertaken within the "framework" of SEATO. If there was not "continued confidence in SEATO and a willingness by the US to provide leadership and support for SEATO military operations," it was CINCPAC's view that the whole of mainland Southeast Asia would in time be lost.

Proceeding to specific provisions of the JCS plan, CINCPA said that:

1. "Southern Laos and the Mekong River Valley" should be defined as nothing less than that area demarcated by him on 16 May 1961 (see item). Otherwise, the following condition would result:

- a. Exposure of the northwest border of South Viet Nam to greatly increased Viet Cong infiltration.
- b. Control by the enemy of key mountain passes.
- c. A forward mounting area for the Communists in southern Laos that would be ideal for overt or covert aggression in Southeast Asia.
- d. A territory remaining to the RLG that would be militarily difficult to defend.

2. Bases in Laos to mount air operations against North Viet Nam and possibly South China, as envisioned by the plan, would not be necessary. Bases in Thailand or South Viet Nam and US aircraft carriers were more feasible. The principal airbase requirement in Laos would be the use of Seno for logistical airlift.

3. The plan should recognize that the situation in Southeast Asia might be "considerably more critical" at the time of its implementation than at present.

4. Although the Communists might negotiate for a politically divided Laos, they would probably not agree to withdrawing from certain key areas. Regaining this territory would

would entail a "combat situation requiring sizeable friendly forces."

5. Regarding the stipulation that participation by US combat forces would be held to a minimum, CINCPAC did not believe that the US should back down on its SEATO commitments. A reduced US commitment could, for instance, provide Sarit with some justification for hedging on Thai commitments. The plan should therefore, CINCPAC said, incorporate the basic force structure of SEATO Plan 5, with the possible addition of South Vietnamese forces.

(See item 7 August 1961.)

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS 200007Z Jul 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 999022, 14 Jul 61.

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20 Jul 61 The Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) issued, for its own use, a report of the current situation in Laos. This report dwelt at some length on the status of the Geneva Conference, the political situation in Laos, the Laotian military situation, and the differences of opinion between the US and UK regarding military action in Laos. The report also noted in passing that the ICC remained ineffective in controlling the cease-fire.

Status of the Geneva Conference. According to the ISA report, the Communist delegations had adopted the line that a strengthened ICC, such as that sought by the US and France, would infringe upon the sovereignty of Laos. The Communists first had refused to agree to send instructions to the ICC and insisted that the control commission depend on the "parties in Laos" for necessary materiel, in spite of US and French offers of equipment. Next, the Communists had balked at any discussion of control arrangements, urging

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instead that the Conference begin substantive discussions of Lao neutrality.

The US, convinced that no Lao Government could maintain its neutrality in the absence of effective controls, had insisted that the Conference first come to grips with the question of strengthening the ICC. The US stand had been supported by the UK, RLG, South Viet Nam (SVN), Thailand, France, and Canada.

The Communist and Western delegations, however, had compromised by agreeing to consider first a declaration of neutrality and then turn to the subject of controls. If continued disagreement on a particular provision prolonged debate for more than one additional day, the Conference would move on to the next provision. Also, the discussions of neutrality and of controls were to form a "single whole," and agreement on individual articles would not be binding until the Conference had approved an entire settlement to the Laotian problem.

Political situation in Laos. The ISA noted a more marked "polarization" of forces since the Zurich communique. Souvanna and Souphanouvong were pressing for a dominant role in the coalition government, while the Pathet Lao was building up its forces. At the opposite pole, Phoumi, who had returned from Washington (see item 29,30 June 1961) with an apparent misunderstanding of the scope of US commitments, was reorganizing his forces and perfecting his military plans.

Phoumi was attempting to maneuver Souvanna and Souphanouvong into accepting the authority of the King and of the Lao constitution. He hoped eventually to talk the King into serving as Prime Minister of the coalition government, a post demanded by Souvanna. Since the King probably

would

would refuse to head the government, the US might well have to choose between accepting Souvanna as Prime Minister or supporting Phoumi with force.

At Ban Namone, the Pathet Lao continued to oppose the seating of ICC representatives. The RLG, in the meantime, was seeking, with some degree of effectiveness, to disrupt the Souvanna-Souphanouvong front by warning the neutrals that the Pathet Lao would dominate an integrated national Army.

Military situation. The report stated that the Pathet Lao forces, which were growing in strength, could capture the population centers within a few days, provided that no outside help was received by the FAL. Phoumi planned to concentrate in the south and to hold that portion of the Kingdom with the assistance of South Viet Nam and Thailand. He also hoped that US forces would become involved.

US-UK differences. The report outlined three differences of opinion that had come to light during the conversations between CINCPAC and Admiral Luce of the Royal Navy (see item 22 June 1961).

1. The US, unlike the UK, favored support, after intervention, of an FAL offensive to recapture the ground lost since the 3 May cease-fire.

2. The US, in spite of British reservations, favored the recapture, in the event of intervention, of any Mekong River sites lost to the Communists before SEATO troops arrived on the scene.

3. The US, notwithstanding UK reservations, believed that the FAL was capable of fighting effectively if given adequate support by foreign forces.

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(UNK) "Current Situation in Laos," 20 Jul 61; CASD (ISA).  
FER/SEA Branch files.

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21 Jul 61 In response to a State Department request (see item 3 July 1961), the US Country Team in Laos reported on further non-military efforts that might usefully be made to strengthen the position of the RLG and the King within Laos. The Country Team emphasized at the outset of its report that severe restrictions presently existed upon the effectiveness of such nonmilitary endeavors. First, there were few areas in Laos where either US or Lao civilians could operate with reasonable personal safety; second, to succeed, these efforts would have to overcome the administrative ineptitude of the RLG and the shortage of trained Lao personnel. Within these limitations, the Country Team recommended a number of projects - medical, civic action, information and psychological warfare, village self-help, food, and transportation - "which could in due course have a useful effect." In the final analysis, the Country Team concluded, the success or failure in these efforts would depend on the extent to which the Lao felt they were being provided not only material benefits but also security against Pathet Lao intimidations and reprisals.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 106, 21 Jul 61.

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21 Jul 61 General Phoumi told Ambassador Brown that the King wanted to know if the US had decided to support Souvanna as Prime Minister of Laos. In response, Brown explained that the US had not taken a position for or against Souvanna as Prime Minister. The US reaction regarding a Souvanna government would depend on the composition of the government and especially the role that Phoumi and his colleagues would play in it.

The US, said the Ambassador, would support any government upon which the Lao would agree, and which gave assurance that

that it would not be Communist-dominated. US policy, continued the US Ambassador, had been clearly expressed by the President when he had told General Phoumi in Washington (see item 29, 30 June 1961) that the US would have to reserve its judgement until it could "look at the entire package."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 114, 21 Jul 61.

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21 Jul 61 The British Minister in Washington informed the Secretary of State of Lord Home's "increasing concern" about developments in Laos. The UK Foreign Secretary thought it possible that Phoumi's unyielding attitude might, for example, result in the collapse of the cease-fire. Since progress at Geneva went hand in hand with progress at Ban Namone and among the Princes, the Conference might be unable to restore the shattered truce. Phoumi might then attempt to partition the country, with southern Laos being held by SEATO.

Concern over this possible sequence of events prompted Lord Home to suggest that the US, UK, and France urge Phoumi and Boun Oum to be flexible in negotiations. The British Foreign Secretary considered the formation of a coalition government headed by Souvanna to be the key to a peaceful solution of the Laotian problem. The RLG, however, was not to be encouraged to give in to unreasonable demands.

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(S) Ltr, Br Min in Wash to SecState, 21 Jul 61, OASD (ISA), FER/SEA Branch files.

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23 Jul 62 CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that consideration be given to providing the RED EYE weapon (a heat-seeking ground-to-air rocket) to the Meo or selected FAL regular units, for use against the Soviet airlift into Laos (see item 10 August 1961)

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230011Z Jul 61.

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On

24, 28  
Jul 61

On 24 July, CINCPAC requested that he be authorized to augment the Filipino technicians in Laos (ECCOIL) by 76 men, in order to help correct FAL maintenance deficiencies (as noted by the CJCS - see item 7 July 1961).

On 28 July 1961, the Department of Defense approved CINCPAC's request.

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 240143Z Jul 61; (C) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 999725, 28 Jul 61.

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26 Jul 61 While discoursing on the subject of Berlin with Mr. John J. McCloy, the President's Adviser on Disarmament, Khrushchev referred briefly to the Laotian problem. He reiterated the Soviet line that it was the United States, not the Soviets, who had first interfered in Laos. The US had given weapons to Thailand to be used in attacks against Souvanna, the Soviet leader asserted. Since the US, UK, France, and even King Savang "agree" to have Souvanna as Prime Minister, these matters, Khrushchev stated, should be discussed without anyone's interfering in Laos.

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(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 323, 28 Jul 61.

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26 Jul 61 General Maxwell D. Taylor, in a memorandum for the President, stated that during his examination of the need to increase the SVN Army he had become "increasingly aware of the need for a rational analysis of the need for military forces in Laos and Thailand, as well as in Vietnam." In this regard, General Taylor pointed out that no existing military plan was adequate to cope with continued Communist infiltration from the north, through Laos, into South Viet Nam. In General Taylor's opinion, the rebuilding of the FAL did not provide the entire solution to the immediate military danger.

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The general believed that the effort in northern Laos should be continued and that a secure base should be established in southern Laos to provide support for operations in the north.

The establishment of such a base, however, would require cooperation among Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam, together with US encouragement and assistance. Thus, what was needed, according to General Taylor, was a strategic plan for the entire Southeast Asia area.

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(S) Memo, Gen Taylor to Pres, "Southeast Asian Planning," 26 Jul 61, copy on file with DepDir, J-3.

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28 Jul 61 Brigadier General Lansdale, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, requested that the Joint Staff develop plans for the contingency that, in the "post-Geneva period," the Department of Defense might assume responsibility for Meo operations in Laos.

[REDACTED]

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(S) Memo, Asst to SecDef to DJCS, 28 Jul 61, att to JCS 2344/5, 7 Aug 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61). (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 2018, 26 Oct 61.

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28 Jul 61 During an interview with King Savang, Ambassador Brown mentioned Phoumi's proposal for a national Congress to amend the constitution in order to give "full power" to the King. When asked by Brown if he had approved this proposal the King replied: "'The Congress yes, the full powers no . . . . However, if the Government and the Congress want it, I must accept.'"

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 151, 28 Jul 61.

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At Ban Namone

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28 Jul -  
16 Aug 61

At Ban Namone on 28 July, the RLG presented draft cease-fire regulations designed to prevent the movement of troops beyond positions certified by a control committee as having been occupied on 25 April 1961. In areas where movements had taken place after that date, the troops involved were to return to the certified positions. The regulations also placed limitations on the movements of troops and equipment, called for the separation of large concentrations of opposing troops, and imposed restrictions on supply operations.

Joint military committees established on the central, regional, and local levels were made responsible for supervising and controlling the truce. In general, these committees would certify troops positions, attempt to ease tensions, impose limits upon the areas occupied by opposing forces, control reinforcements and resupply, prevent offensive operations, and settle any disputes that might arise. The committees also were responsible for investigating possible truce violations.

The ICC, which was to cooperate with the committees in a spirit of "mutual consideration, assistance, and fairness," had the task of observing and assisting in the implementation of the cease-fire agreement. Although the ICC was expected to aid in resolving disputes, serious disagreements could be resolved only at the highest echelon of the committee system.

In commenting upon this draft, Ambassador Brown called the attention of the Department of State to the "inadequate treatment" of the ICC. Subsequently, however, Phoumi offered a revised draft in which the ICC received even briefer mention.

The Secretary of State, upon learning of Phoumi's proposed revision, informed Ambassador Brown on 16 August that the document remained "highly unsatisfactory" and urged that

the RLG

the RLG withdraw it. On the following day, however, Ambassador Brown reported that the amended version had on the 14th been introduced at the Ban Namone conference (see items 12 and 29 August 1961).

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 174, 30 Jul 61; 184, 1 Aug 61; 268, 17 Aug 61; (S) Msg, State to Vientiane, 135, 1 Aug 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 170, 29 Jul 61; 201, 6 Aug 61; 253, 15 Aug 61; (C) Msg, State to Vientiane, 172, 16 Aug 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 169, 29 Jul 61.

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29 Jul 61 In a circular telegram, the Secretary of State expressed the Department's concern with the "generally negative attitude of the Lao toward strict ICC controls" (see previous item) and instructed the US representatives in Vientiane and Geneva as well as in Bangkok, Phnom Penh, and Saigon, to endeavor to "get the Lao to assume a more realistic viewpoint on this subject."

In general, these US diplomatic representatives were to review the recent history of Laos, stressing the obvious need for strong protection from "outside meddling" until the kingdom had organized a system of administration, developed its "physical infrastructure," and created adequate internal security forces. The necessary interim protection could best be provided by an ICC with complete freedom of access to all parts of Laos. Moreover, the objection that an effective ICC would infringe upon the kingdom's sovereignty was invalid, for the presence of the ICC would pose less danger to Laotian sovereignty than would the subversion and civil strife which the Commission could halt.

In addition, US diplomatic representatives in London, Paris, and Geneva were instructed to point out to the French and British the importance to the "entire program of deterrence" of obtaining an effective ICC and the fact that those

who

who desired a settlement should realize that "there is a price to pay." In this case, the price was a strong ICC. If France and the UK did not want SEATO action, observed the Secretary of State, "then let them support us in securing proper controls to safeguard the free world interest." Also, the French, subject to the concurrence of the US delegation at Geneva, might be persuaded to sound out Souvanna on the subject of the ICC.

The RTG and the Government of SVN were to be informed of US tactics and requested to support the American position. The Indians, Burmese, and Cambodians could be informed to the extent that US diplomatic missions considered appropriate.

(On 2 August, the American Embassy in London reported to the Secretary of State that, according to the British Foreign Office, "Her Majesty's Government fully shared our views and is highly disturbed by the RLG's 'selling the US down the river.'" The Foreign Office was especially concerned that the RLG had submitted its draft without consulting the US. The British, the report continued, considered the RLG cease-fire proposals so unsatisfactory that to attempt to amend them would merely underline US and UK differences of opinion with the RLG and "provide open invitation for Communist exploitation."

On 7 August, Ambassador Harriman, commenting on the reported views of the British Foreign Office, stated that the RLG cease-fire document could be amended in a satisfactory fashion. He added, however, that because the existing ICC was unpopular with all factions in Laos, stronger representations would have to be made to Phoumi and Souvanna. Phoumi, the Ambassador continued, "must be made to realize that as the representative of a minority (at least in the

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sense of military strength and probably in the next coalition government) he cannot survive without help and support from a fully effective ICC. Souvanna must be convinced that a written guarantee of such an ICC is an essential prerequisite of any US support for him as Prime Minister.")

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(S) Dept of State CIRC 173, 29 Jul 61; (S) Msgs, London to SecState, 505, 2 Aug 61, and Paris to SecState, 680, 7 Aug 61.

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30 Jul 61 The Lao National Congress passed a constitutional amendment authorizing the Congress, when the kingdom's "existence is threatened" to grant the King the power to form a government. The King could then either assume the premiership himself or appoint a government "of his own choosing." Parliamentary investiture would not be necessary.

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(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 165, 29 Jul 61; (OUC) Vientiane to SecState, 176, 30 Jul 61.

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Jul 61

CHMAAG Laos in a message to CINCPAC, and the US Ambassador in Laos in a message to the Department of State, recommended that RB-26 "Eyeball" reconnaissance missions be resumed. (B-26 reconnaissance flights had previously been authorized on 26 April (see item) "until the cease-fire"; they had consequently ceased on 3 May.) These missions were deemed necessary to obtain adequate intelligence on enemy build up and resupply activities. Both officials stated further that the C-45 and PV-2 aircraft presently conducting "eyeball" reconnaissance flights could not carry on against the improvised Communist anti-aircraft defenses.

(See items 27 and 29 August 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 172, 20 Jul 61;  
CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 137089, 3 Aug 61.

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31 Jul 61 The Geneva Conference engaged in a three-day discussion of whether a continued French military presence in Laos should be specifically mentioned in the proposed declaration of Laotian neutrality. The US and UK supported France by urging the exemption of French contingents from any blanket requirement for the withdrawal from Laos of all foreign troops. The RLG, however, merely stated that the status of the existing French Military Mission had been fixed by an agreement negotiated between the two Governments involved and that, for this reason, the future of the mission was a matter that should be reserved for the coalition government. The NLHX opposed this perpetuation of French influence. Souvanna's delegation at first supported fully the NLHX position, then declared that the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961) required the evacuation of French personnel but that the status of the Seno base should be the subject of future negotiations.

In commenting upon the actions of the RLG delegation, US Consul General Martin indicated that the "strong anti-French position of Phoumi and the RLG delegation at Zurich" may have resulted in a compromise with Souvanna (see item 15-17 September 1961 for Souvanna's comments) and a "muddled communique followed by NLHX watering down of their [RLG?] previously clear endorsement of the continued French military presence." Once again, continued the US Consul General, the Western position had been "eroded by the failure of the Boun Oum-Phoumi government to face the realities of the situation." Mr. Martin then concluded by pointing out that Phoumi should be warned

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be warned that US support entailed cooperation and consultation on the part of the RLG.

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(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 488, 4 Aug 61.

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1 Aug 61 The Deputy Secretary of Defense requested that the JCS undertake a study of force requirements for Southeast Asia. The purpose of the study would be "to set forth a force structure (US and Allied) to include forces deployed on the mainland of Southeast Asia and in reserve, which is considered capable of holding non-Communist Southeast Asia against attack by the Communist Bloc, including Communist China." The area to be held would include Thailand, Cambodia, South Viet Nam, and "the necessary southern part of Laos"; however, other less ambitious lines of defense might also be examined. The study should state the requirements for defense of the area both "under conditions in which neither side employ nuclear weapons" and "under conditions in which either side initiates the use of nuclear weapons." The study should, finally, include an assessment of the logistical problems for both sides. It should assume the cooperation of the Southeast Asian SEATO Allies and should cover the time span 1962-1966. (See items 18 September 1961 and 15 November 1961.)

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(S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Aug 61, encl to JCS 2339/12, 9 Aug 61; JMF 9150/3410 (1 Aug 61).

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2 Aug 61 In a circular telegram, the Secretary of State informed various US Embassies of "current Washington thinking" on US diplomatic strategy regarding a Laotian settlement and provided guidance for future actions by US representatives in Geneva and in Laos. The objective of US strategy, according to the Secretary of State, was the "reunification of Laos under a neutral government whose neutrality would be safeguarded by an effective international presence."

After making this general statement, the Secretary of State discussed five facets of US policy: 1) the ICC;

2) international



2) international aspects of the cease-fire and the re-organization of a unified Lao Army; 3) the formation of a government of national union; 4) tactics for the Geneva Conference; and 5) present courses of action to be continued by the US. In addition, the Secretary of State asked the US diplomatic representatives in Geneva and Vientiane for recommendations on how to convince Souvanna that a "satisfactory" ICC was an "essential element" of a Laotian settlement.

1. The ICC. Secretary Rusk noted that "the central issue coming into focus at Geneva is the power of the ICC to supervise and control: a) the withdrawal of foreign troops, b) the terms of a cease-fire to be negotiated between the parties at Ban Namone, and c) the introduction of foreign military personnel and equipment." He considered it vital that the ICC be able to carry out these tasks.

In order to perform these three functions, the Secretary of State continued, the ICC would require "unrestricted ability to move, to investigate, and to report." In turn, the principal means to insure that the Commission had this ability was to provide it with: a) unconditional control of its own communications equipment and transport; b) free and immediate access to all parts of the kingdom; c) authority to decide issues by majority vote and to make minority reports; d) adequate personnel; and e) a guarantee that the Lao Government would assure the commission's security. An effective ICC, moreover, could not be hampered by a veto exercised by either the Geneva co-Chairmen, the Lao Government, or the commission members. In addition, the ICC should be able to deal in some way with the basic problem of the Lao coalition, the integration of factional contingents

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into a unified army.

2. International aspects of the cease-fire and the integration of Lao forces. Secretary Rusk hoped that the Western and RLG positions could be introduced, preferably at Geneva but if necessary at Ban Namone.

3. Formation of a government of national union. Regarding the composition of the cabinet, the Secretary of State commented that a fairly detailed analysis of the various possibilities would be necessary. No cabinet, however, was to be formed until a satisfactory ICC had been agreed upon, and a satisfactory cease-fire was in effect. If the cabinet were formed before these issues had been settled, the US, the RLG, and Souvanna's Xieng Khouang faction would forfeit their bargaining power; for the Pathet Lao, if unchecked by an ICC and by cease-fire terms, would dominate the kingdom.

4. US tactics at the Geneva Conference. The Secretary of State believed that the US delegation should attempt "to get the equipment and access issues satisfactorily resolved insofar as the existing ICC is concerned" before the Conference neared the end of its agenda. In the event that the Conference bogged down completely, the US would seek an indefinite suspension on the basis of a continued cease-fire rather than move to have the Conference terminated. If the Conference were indeed suspended before action could be taken on the reform of the existing ICC, the US would simply declare that the commission's supervision of the cease-fire was inadequate but take no action to end the commission's activities. In the meantime, the US would continue working with Souvanna and the RLG to obtain a satisfactory cease-fire an accomplishment which could lead to the resumption of the suspended

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suspended Conference.

5. Present US courses of action. The US, in Secretary Rusk's opinion, would have to continue to support the existing RLG, train and equip the FAL, and seek implementation and further development of plans to contain Pathet Lao and Viet Minh armed forces and of programs of political action, economic aid, and technical assistance.

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(S) Dept of State CIRC 197, 2 Aug 61.

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2 Aug 61 The US Ambassador in Vientiane, having reviewed various proposals concerning the formation of a coalition cabinet, informed the Secretary of State that the US should "aim for as large a cabinet as possible." The most realistic solution seemed to be the inclusion of Souvanna and three of his followers, three representatives of the Pathet Lao, three members of the present RLG, and four strongly anti-Communist neutrals not associated with Souvanna's Xieng Khouang faction.

As to the individual cabinet portfolios, Ambassador Brown considered it "most important" that anti-Communists hold Defense, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Religion, Information, and Education, while the Pathet Lao was limited to comparatively minor posts. Such a distribution, however, could be complicated by Souvanna's insistence upon key posts for his followers or by the Pathet Lao's desire to offset the influence of vigorous anti-Communists who might be selected for the cabinet.

Because of Souvanna's habit of not consulting with his colleagues, the anti-Communist ministers would have to be strong men, capable of overcoming the Prince's autocratic tendencies. In addition, the membership of the cabinet should

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should, in the Ambassador's opinion, provide appropriate representation to the various provinces.

Among the specific individuals recommended by the Ambassador were, for the RLG bloc, Phoumi as Minister of either Defense or Interior and Khampan Pantha, "the only really strong personality" within the RLG, as Minister of either Foreign Affairs or Information. Ambassador Brown also believed that Phoumi should be urged to press for the inclusion of Phoui among the four anti-Communist neutrals.

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(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 156, 2 Aug 61.

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3 Aug 61 The Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, after calling attention to General Taylor's views on South-east Asian planning (see item 26 July 1961) and mentioning the limitations of SEATO Plan 5, suggested to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) that contingency military plans be developed for three possible Laotian political situations.

Situation 1. A deliberate Communist breach of the cease-fire at the conclusion of the rainy season in an effort to overrun Laos rapidly. If such a situation did develop, the Deputy Under Secretary believed that Western response "would be in accordance with SEATO PLAN 5." The US, however should "realistically realize" that France "would not participate actively with her forces" (see item 29 September 1961).

Situation 2. An attempt by Phoumi, with or without the King's consent, to maintain the Boun Oum Government after the collapse of negotiations among the Princes and in the face of pressure from Souvanna and Souphannouvong.

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In this situation, which he considered the likeliest of the three, the Deputy Under Secretary suggested that the US "offensive" be based "first from Vietnam and also from Laos." The operation in Laos, however, "would be a holding one or one that would strengthen an operation by the RLG, supported by the Thai and Vietnamese, in the panhandle. American support would be kept to a minimum as far as ground operations were concerned. . . ." The US, he continued, "should contemplate carrying the offensive in its final stages to the DRV itself" (see item 7 August 1961).

Situation 3. The successful establishment of a neutral provisional government for Laos. Should this happen, the US would have to withdraw its forces from Laos and respect that nation's sovereignty and neutrality; but, while waiting to see whether a neutral Laos could really exist, "our insurance for the security of Southeast Asia would have to be based on our programs in Thailand and Vietnam."

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(TS) Ltr, Dep USec State (Pol Aff) to Dep ASD (ISA), 3 Aug 61, copy on file with Dep Dir Opns, J-3.

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3 Aug 61 In furtherance of a program suggested by the JCS on 2 June (see item), the Department of State requested each Chief of Mission in Southeast Asia to review the intelligence collection efforts in his country and present his analysis and recommendations (see item 15 August for Ambassador Brown's report).

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(S) SecState, CIRC 204, 3 Aug 61.

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5 Aug 61 After conferring at Phnom Penh on 1, 2, and 4 August, Princes Boun Oum and Souvanna distributed to the press a joint communique summarizing the results of their meeting.

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The communique stated that, subject to the approval of the absent Prince Souphanouvong, they had agreed to cooperate in establishing a true coalition cabinet which would not be a mere enlargement of the former cabinet of either Prince. They agreed to a future meeting at Luang Prabang, a session to which Prince Souphanouvong would be invited. This meeting was to be held after delegations from the three factions had, during the meetings at Ban Namone or at some other acceptable site, studied the issues involved in forming a new government (see item 6 September 1961).

(On the following day, while forwarding to the Secretary of State his comments on Phoumi's report of the Phnom Penh meetings, Ambassador Brown observed that, although contact had been re-established between the two Princes, it was evident that neither party had made any real effort to reach agreement on a new government or to explore the other party's ideas.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 200, 6 Aug 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 106, 5 Aug 61.

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6 Aug 61 CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the three helicopters proposed for loan to the RLG and subsequent use by the ICC (see item 11-13 July 1961) be provided from CONUS assets. CINCPAC stated that none of the helicopters presently in Laos could be spared for the ICC without injury to existing missions, and that his helicopter strength had already been severely depleted. (See item 2 September 1961.)

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 137819, 6 Aug 61.

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7 Aug 61 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC for his comments, a "Concept for Multinational Task Force Operations in Southeast Asia." This

This paper, developed in the Joint Staff, (see item 11 July 1961) set forth a plan for securing and defending the remaining friendly areas in Southeast Asia subsequent to a division of Laos. Presuming a RLG appeal to the Free World nations for military assistance, the plan established a multinational task force (MTF), comprised of non-mainland-Southeast Asian countries, which would deploy to Thailand, South Viet Nam, and southern Laos to free the native armies of these nations to conduct "other military activities." The MTF would also be prepared to conduct offensive air, naval, and guerrilla operations from its positions against northern Laos, North Viet Nam and southern China, as applicable.

The plan called for the deployment of the following forces:

1. Multinational Task Force

- a. 1 USARPAC infantry division and 1/3 Marine Div/Wing Team to secure key localities in the vicinities of Tourane, Udorn, Savannakhet, Seno, and Khorat.
- b. 1 US logistical command (augmented) to Bangkok.
- c. 1 US Composite Air Strike Force to appropriate bases in South Viet Nam and Thailand.
- d. 1 US Special Forces Group to Udorn.
- e. 1 Pakistani brigade-size force to Thakhek.
- f. 1 New Zealand infantry battalion (if available) to Paksane.
- g. 1 Australian infantry battalion (if available) to Pakse.
- h. 2 US attack carrier strike groups off the South Viet Nam coast.

i. 1 US

- i. 1 US airborne battle group held in reserve at Clark AFB, P.I.
- j. Philippine and UK forces (if available) held in reserve in Thailand.
- k. French forces (if available) to assist in securing the Seno area.

2. Indigenous Forces

- a. 1 Thai infantry division to Sayboursy province.
- b. Available South Vietnamese forces to the Lao-South Viet Nam border areas.
- c. The FAL would secure Luang Prabang and, if the New Zealand contribution did not materialize, Paksane.
- d. Other Thai, South Vietnamese, and Lao forces would intensify their respective internal security activities.

(Presumably as a result of CINCPAC's strong objections (see item 20 July 1961), this plan differed significantly in concept from its original version (see item 11 July 1961). The MTF concept took into account CINCPAC's views that any operation of this type should take place within a "SEATO framework." Also, in harmony with CINCPAC's warning that the US should not promulgate any plan that reduced US contributions in Laos, the plan provided US forces as large as those envisaged for SEATO Plan 5 (see item 5 April 1961). Moreover, the plan, which originally had specified simply that US force contributions would be "minimum" and Southeast Asian contributions "maximum," now stipulated that "without reducing the priority of US force deployments, emphasis will be placed on the conspicuous utilization of Asian forces." (See

item



item 17 August 1961.)

[The President was briefed on this plan on 10 August; the President "noted" it.]

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(TS) JCS 2339/11, 2 Aug 61; JMF 9150/3100 (13 May 61).  
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1051, 7 Aug 61.

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7 Aug 61 The CJCS responded to a Presidential query regarding the current status of Wattay (Vientiane) and Seno (Savannakhet) airfields. Both airfields, said the Chairman, were in "good" condition. Wattay's capacity was 36 sorties daily by either C-124 or C-130 aircraft; Seno could handle 60 sorties, but could not be used by fully loaded C-124s.

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(TS) CM-307-61 to Pres, 7 Aug 61, OCJCS Files 091  
Laos (3).

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7 Aug 61 The US Ambassador to Thailand suggested to the Secretary of State that US military units be rotated into and out of Thailand for joint training with Thai units. The US could realize in this manner, the Ambassador emphasized, a continual US combat presence in Thailand, while skirting the RTG objection to the permanent stationing of US combat troops.

(On 20 August, CINCPAC endorsed the Ambassador's proposal, but warned that any Thai participation in the program would have to be subsidized.) (See item 2 October 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 181, 7 Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 142050, 20 Aug 61.

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7 Aug 61 The foreign ministers of the US, UK, and France, in session in Paris, agreed that their three governments should seek a basis

basis for a common policy supporting Souvanna as Prime Minister of a neutral Laotian Government. However, in order to arrive at such a basis, prior understanding should be sought with Souvanna and other Lao leaders on: 1) composition of the neutral government; 2) the role of the ICC; 3) the future of the Lao Army and the problem of PL forces; and 4) the French military presence. Regarding tactics, the ministers agreed that the French should make the initial approach to Souvanna, emphasizing the Western consensus on composition of the government and the future of the PAL; the British would follow up, concentrating on the role of the ICC and the French military presence. Simultaneously, the US would inform the RLG of the tenor of the Western position and attempt to persuade the RLG to conform to this position in its negotiations with Souvanna (see item 9-11 August 1961).

The following were the agreed positions of the three nations:

1. Composition of a Neutral Lao Government

First, Souvanna should "support the monarchy and the constitution." Second, the cabinet portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Interior should be denied to the PL or even to Souvanna followers closely associated with the PL. Phoumi should be given a "very high civilian post," and a large center group should be constituted from figures associated with neither the PL nor the RLG. A few PL could be in the cabinet, provided they held no key portfolios, and were balanced by an equal number of Phoumi adherents.

Further, Souvanna would be "expected" to postpone national elections until: a) suitable provision had been made for handling the problem of PL forces; b) the

non-Communist

non-Communist elements had been able to organize their political strength; and c) a "satisfactory degree of tranquility" had been restored to Laos.

## 2. The ICC

The present composition of the ICC was acceptable. Its authority should encompass supervision of the cease-fire, withdrawal and any subsequent entry of foreign military personnel and equipment, and, eventually, elections. The ICC should be empowered to conduct investigations anywhere in Laos, at the request of the Lao Government or any ICC member. Since Souvanna was known to feel that the ICC should have Lao consent to conduct its investigations, he should be pressed to guarantee that such consent would never, in fact, be withheld. Further, "the ICC should not be hampered by veto powers," and it should submit majority and minority reports. Finally, the ICC should be adequately manned and logistically independent, and its security should be assured by the RLG.

## 3. The Laotian Army and PL Forces

A small Laotian Army, loyal to the central government, should be formed and all other forces disbanded. Souvanna should be asked whether he had practical plans for achieving this aim "in a manner likely to minimize Pathet Lao influence."

## 4. The French Presence

Souvanna should agree that a French military presence would be maintained under conditions satisfactory to the French.

Reporting to the Department of State, the Secretary of State noted he had told his confreres that the US would be in no way obligated to the above agreement if a new Lao

Government

Government was constituted "in such a manner as to make neutrality impossible."

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(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, SECTO 30 and SECTO 31, 7 Aug 61; SECTO 42, 8 Aug 61.

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7, 9  
Aug 61

In a message to the Secretary of State the US Consul General in Geneva, commenting upon recent instructions from the Secretary of State (see item 2 August 1961), stated on 7 August that to introduce at Geneva any proposals dealing with the reorganization of the Lao Army would "simply add fuel to the already strong Communist attack on the French/US drafts (for JCS views on the discussion of this subject, see item 22 June 1961). For this reason, he agreed that it would be necessary to work with Souvanna and the RLG in order to resolve this question at the Ban Namone cease-fire talks.

On 9 August, the US Consul General stated that the principal advantage of including provisions for the integration of Lao armed forces in the cease-fire agreement was that such an arrangement would enable the ICC, in the course of supervising the cease-fire, to control the integration and demobilization of the factional forces. He suggested that Ambassador Brown might find it desirable to explain this line of reasoning to Phoumi. The Consul General then expressed his belief that it was probably appropriate to emphasize to Phoumi the US view that provisions for "handling the Pathet Lao and reconstituting the Lao Army" should be negotiated before the formation of a coalition government. It would be necessary, however, to develop a clear formula, which the US had not yet done, so that Phoumi would have "some pretty specific ideas on how this might be accomplished before he gets into serious negotiations on this with the

Souvanna

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Souvanna and Pathet Lao groups."

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 498, 9 Aug 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 492, 7 Aug 61.

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8 Aug 61 In a circular telegram, Under Secretary of State Ball, in response to a request from Geneva for guidance concerning the problem of determining the future relationship between Laos and SEATO, expressed the belief that the US, UK, France, and other nations should urge possible leaders of the Laotian coalition government not to "act too hastily or impetuously in cutting the RLG off from SEATO," an objective sought by the Communists, and not to abridge the right of the kingdom, as a member of the UN, to call for outside help in the event of armed attack.

At present, American diplomatic representatives were to stress the defensive character of SEATO, the fact that SEATO could not intervene in Laos without the consent of the Laotian Government, the respect that SEATO had shown for Cambodian neutrality, and the possible future value of SEATO protection in bargaining between the Laotian Government and Communist nations.

Meanwhile, the Department of State would consider possible alternatives to SEATO protection in the event that the coalition government, in spite of US arguments to the contrary, was intent upon renouncing aid from all military alliances. Any US concessions, which might ultimately prove necessary on this issue, were to be reserved, if possible, until the end of the Geneva Conference, and then granted, if necessary, in return for genuine concessions by the Communist

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(C) Dept of State CIRC 236, 8 Aug 61.

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The JCS

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8 Aug 61 The JCS deferred, approval of CINCPAC's request that RED EYE missiles be used in Laos (see item 23 July 1961). Their final decision would depend, the JCS said, upon: 1) the results of upcoming tests of the missile; 2) comparison of the missile's probable effectiveness in Laos with the risks of its probable early compromise; and 3) political approval.

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1091, 8 Aug 61.

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8, 9  
Aug 61

The Department of State, believing that "closer definition" should be given to the "key" portfolios of a Lao coalition government (as discussed by the US, UK, and French foreign ministers; see item 7 August 1961), requested Ambassador Brown on 8 August to give his views on the relative importance of cabinet posts. The Department felt that Defense, Interior (if the police fell under it), Youth, Veterans, Religion, and Social Affairs were posts which should "definitely" be denied the PL; Foreign Affairs, Education, and Information, while also important, formed a second category. The remaining posts (e.g., Finance, Economic Affairs, et al) might with less risk be entrusted to the PL.

On 9 August Ambassador Brown replied to the Department. He agreed that Foreign Affairs, which portfolio Souvanna would undoubtedly retain for himself, was not of the first importance. However, contrary to the Department's view, he felt that the portfolios of Education and Information, because of their influence on Lao thought, were of first importance. Moreover, Economic Affairs, while not a crucial post, might, Brown warned, include Rural Development. Brown considered the most important cabinet posts, excluding Foreign Affairs, to be, in order of importance: Defense, Interior,

Rural

Rural Development, Information, Religion, Education, Social Affairs, Youth, and Veterans.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 150, 8 Aug 61; Vientiane to SecState, 216, 9 Aug 61.

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8-11  
Aug 61

On the evening of 8 August, Communist howitzers in Xieng Khouang town opened fire on Meo units in the nearby hills. The Meo units held their positions, however, and responded with mortar and recoilless rifle fire. This "artillery duel" continued until 11 August, without any troop contact.

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(S) JCS Laos SITREP/52-61, 17 Aug 61. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 259, 16 Aug 61.

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9-11  
Aug 61

On consecutive days, Ambassador Brown explained the Western foreign ministers' agreement on Laos (see item 7 August 1961) to Phoumi, Boun Oum, and the King. He detailed to the three Lao each provision of the Western accord, refraining only from emphasizing that Souvanna was the putative prime minister under the agreement and, at the suggestion of the Department of State, from mentioning that the ICC would have authority to supervise elections. The three Lao accepted with little or no comment the Western proposals on the coalition government, the ICC, and the army. But all three deplored the Western insistence on a French military presence, citing variously their dislike of French hauteur, distrust of French intent, and disillusion with past French performance.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 209 and 210, 9 Aug 61; 221, 10 Aug 61; 237, 11 Aug 61. (S) Msg, SecState CIRC 219, 8 Aug 61.

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11 Aug 61 Ambassador Brown, commenting upon the Secretary of State's recent statement of "over-all strategy" for Laos (see item

2 August

2 August 1961) stated that the "basic factor in Laos today which in its impact overrides all others" was the military situation on the ground. The US would continue to operate at a disadvantage as long as this situation continued to favor the Communists. This factor affected US efforts to: 1) secure agreement on effective international controls and a strong ICC; 2) bring about withdrawal of foreign forces from Laos; 3) devise measures for integration of PL forces into any national Lao Army which may emerge; 4) help work out satisfactory cease-fire agreement among Lao factions at Ban Namone; and 5) bring about formation of coalition government of a character "we feel we can live with."

The Communists, said the Ambassador, were determined to reap the maximum political advantage from their favorable military posture. Therefore, it would be unrealistic for the US to expect the achievement of a satisfactory role for the ICC or an acceptable arrangement for the integration of PL forces into the Lao Army. Although Phoumi might be willing to negotiate on these points, Brown felt that it was the "other side" that, until a coalition government was formed, would be most unlikely to negotiate.

The military imbalance also served to weaken the effectiveness of US efforts to "hold and force back pro-Communist NLHX and followers" by political action and economic and technical assistance programs. The good results of such programs tended to vanish rapidly when villagers were threatened with the loss of life by the PL. Self-preservation which was the most important consideration of the average Lao would probably determine how he would vote in any future election. Nevertheless, Brown recognized the need for continuing and even stepping up activities in the "political-psychological action area." It was clearly essential for the

US



US not only to assist the RLG in "immunizing" areas still under its control against Communist blandishments and encroachments, but also to build up a solid base for expansion of such activities if and when the situation permitted. Aside from military strength, what was most needed in Laos, stated Brown, was a strong cadre of dedicated, brave and effective local provincial administrators and civil servants, including police.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 231, 11 Aug 61.

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12 Aug 61 The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the Director, Joint Staff, that the RLG cease-fire agreement tabled at Ban Namone on 28 July (see item 28 July-16 August 1961) contained "serious inadequacies" in the role to be given the ICC, and "no provision at all" for the formation of a national army. It did not appear possible to negotiate at Geneva any satisfactory formula for constitution of a new Lao Army, the Defense official said (see item 7, 9 August 1961); control of such reconstitution might therefore devolve upon the ICC. In order that the US position on the ICC at Geneva would not be undercut, the US was urging the RLG to change its draft (see item 28 July-16 August 1961). The Acting Assistant Secretary requested that, for the development of the US position vis-a-vis the RLG, the Director submit the views of the Joint Staff on: 1) regroupment of Lao forces; 2) dissolution of the Pathet Lao; and 3) creation of a new army of Laos. (See item 6 September 1961.)

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(S) Memo, ASD (ISA) to DJS, 12 Aug 61, encl to JCS 2344/7, 18 Aug 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (12 Aug 61).

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In separate

14, 15  
Aug 61

In separate messages, CHMAAG (to JCS) and the US Ambassador in Laos (to State) gave substantially identical evaluations of FAL combat capability. The FAL, the US officials thought remained incapable of offering more than delaying action against enemy attack. Despite some progress in training, organization, and equipment, the FAL continued to be crippled by poor leadership. The "only timely solution" to this leadership problem, the two US officials said, was encadrement of the FAL by US WSMITT's down to the battalion level and Thai personnel down to the platoon level (see item 29 August 1961).

The Ambassador, relying upon CHMAAG's assessment also responded to several questions put to him regarding the possible concentration of FAL forces in the south (as envisaged by a JCS plan under development; see items 11 July and 7 August 1961). This concentration would enhance the FAL capability to delay the enemy, the Ambassador said, but "no scheme of maneuver can of itself compensate" for the basic FAL weakness in leadership. If FAL leadership improved then Thai and South Vietnamese forces in the order of one well equipped and trained division, with one fighter-bomber wing and one troop carrier wing in support could join with the FAL in securing southern Laos.

There was little doubt, the Ambassador continued, of Phoumi's willingness to regroup his forces in the south; he had long indicated that such an operation was "in the back of his mind." The Ambassador had in fact long feared that Phoumi would prematurely launch such an operation and be crushed. Moreover, Phoumi would be glad to cooperate with the Thai and South Vietnamese.

The US

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(TS) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 152, 8 Aug 61; Vientiane to SecState, 247, 14 Aug 61; CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 140391, 15 Aug 61.

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14, 16,  
18 Aug  
61

The US Country Team in Laos submitted its recommendations for future Meo operations under several possible conditions, as follows:

Situation No. 1. With the beginning of the dry season, the Meo would be under heavy enemy pressure, particularly if neither the RLG nor PL initiated a conventional offensive. In this circumstance, the Meo would continue their present irregular tactics. The US would endeavor to improve the effectiveness of the presently organized Meo; at the same time, efforts would be made to enlarge Meo forces in Xieng Khouang province, and to develop the capabilities of minority tribesmen and FAL remnants in Sam Neua province. To accomplish these, and other, aims the Country Team recommended that a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) or joint planning group be formed by MAAG: [REDACTED]

Situation No. 2. A coalition government would be formed with adequate safeguards against a Communist takeover. In this situation, both the US and the Meo would presumably seek an accommodation with this government. The Meo should be instructed to cache their arms and "live with" this new government. The US would, however, guarantee the Meo that, if the new government persecuted them, the US would, at the minimum, support their evacuation and resettlement. In the meantime, the USOM relief program for the Meo would be continued.

Situation No. 3. A coalition government unsatisfactory to the US would be formed. The US might in this case: 1) maintain only a minimal diplomatic presence in Laos;

2) withdraw

2) withdraw diplomatic recognition entirely; or 3) support the present RLG, the Thai, and South Vietnamese in an attempt to defend a partitioned Laos. In either of the first two alternatives, the US should continue whatever assistance was necessary for the evacuation of those Meo who wished to leave Laos. In the third alternative, the US might wish either to support the Meo in their present locations or to resettle them in southern Laos.

Situation No. 4. The present uneasy truce continued. In this circumstance, the activities described in Situation No. 1 (see above) should be undertaken.

Situation No. 5. Hostilities were resumed, by either side, or by US-Thai-South Vietnamese initiative. The Meo would, of course, be of great value as unconventional forces. Ultimate control of their operations would shift from CAS to the Department of Defense.

On 16 August, CINCPAC informed the JCS that he was "in general accord" with the Country Team's recommendations.

On 18 August, the US delegation at Geneva forwarded its comments. With regard to Situations No. 1 and 3 (see above), the delegation expressed concern lest too much emphasis be placed on recruitment, and too little on increased effectiveness of existing units. Situation No. 2 (see above), the delegation said, would be a very favorable outcome for the US, but obviously a very "fragile" situation. The exposure of continued US ties with and support of the Meo might be "embarrassing and possibly serious." Moreover, the existence of organized armed units would be, from both the Meo and US points of view, less necessary. The US should be careful, the delegation concluded, that by maintaining the military organization of the Meo it did not endanger long-range US

interests

~~TOP SECRET~~  
interests in a stable, genuinely neutral Laos.

(S) Msgs, ~~TOP SECRET~~

JCS, 162327Z Aug 61.

14, 16,  
21 Aug  
61

The meetings at Ban Nampone continued in a virtual deadlock over the method of selecting a Prime Minister for the coalition government. The RLG delegation insisted that the names of at least two candidates for the office of Prime Minister be submitted to the King, but the other delegations demanded the submission of a single name, that of Souvanna.

The military subcommittee, facing an impasse over the effective date of the cease-fire, decided to postpone a decision on this question and agreed instead that, whatever the effective date, all troops would remain in the positions occupied at that time.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 249, 14 Aug 61; 262, 16 Aug 61; 300, 21 Aug 61.

15 Aug 61 In response to a request from the Department of State, the US Ambassador to Thailand gave answers to questions as follows:

1. What measures would Sarit be willing and able to take immediately in Northeast Thailand to deter any Communist guerrilla threat which might arise from untoward developments in Laos?

Sarit could, and probably would as a result of recommendations already submitted by the Ambassador, reorganize his security structure in the Northeast. The RTA had already, the Ambassador noted, begun placing special emphasis in training for counter-guerrilla and jungle operations.

2. Would

2. Would Sarit be willing to join in cooperative military actions with Laos and South Viet Nam designed to hold the present cease-fire line while mopping up PL pockets in southern Laos?

Sarit would join in such an operation, Ambassador Young stated, only if US ground and air forces were also participating. Even at that, the RTA would probably request additional logistical and advisory support, and additional unilateral guarantees of protection by the US.

3. Was JUSMAG Thailand adequately manned to meet the requirements of 1 and 2 above?

CHJUSMAG considered he would need an additional 100 men merely to develop the Thai security program. To support Thai combat activity in Laos, a joint task force separate from JUSMAG should be created.

4. What would be the performance of Thai troops if they engaged in the action described in 2 above?

The Thai troops would perform well in Laos if accompanied by US troops.

5. What special problems in command and coordination would be involved in 2 above?

The principal special problem that Ambassador Young foresaw was that, the Thai would not "accept Lao or Vietnamese command or vice versa." Therefore, the more the US assumed the leadership of the operations, the fewer would be the problems of command.

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(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 165, 8 Aug 61; Bangkok to SecState, 229, 15 Aug 61.

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15 Aug 61 Ambassador Brown reported as requested (see item 3 August 1961) on the status of US intelligence collection in Laos.

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The Ambassador stated that efforts to gather overt intelligence information had been restricted by the combat situation, and the de facto division of, Laos. Intelligence collection in Communist-held areas was limited to normal combat intelligence reports, aerial reconnaissance, and reports from other friendly governments - the French, and occasionally the Canadian ICC members.

Under present conditions, Brown concluded, little could be done to "redirect" intelligence efforts in order better to meet requirements. However, additional MAAG intelligence personnel (presently authorized and requisitioned but not yet on hand) were required, as well as additional aerial reconnaissance, preferably by RB-26s (see items 30, 31 July and 29 August 1961).

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 255, 15 Aug 61.

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16 Aug 61 In a public address in New Delhi, Prime Minister Nehru outlined Indian policy toward the Laotian problem. It had been "admitted all round," he noted, that Laos should be a neutral state, and that foreign armies should be removed from Laotian territory.

There had been, said Nehru, "some argument" about the role of the ICC. The Indian attitude toward this subject was that the ICC could perform a very important and useful service in Laos. But it could only do this with the good will of the Laotian Government and people. The Commission, he declared, could not be a kind of "super-Government." It must stand on its rights as delineated by the 14-nation conference and operate with a fair measure of freedom to investigate charges of cease-fire violations throughout Laos.

CINCPAC

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(U) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, A-74, 1 Sep 61.

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17 Aug 61 CINCPAC, as requested, submitted to the JCS his comments on the "Concept for Multinational Task Force Operations in Southeast Asia" (see item 7 August 1961). Having already delivered his objections to the concept itself (see item 20 July 1961), CINCPAC confined himself in this message to comments upon specific planned deployments and command relationships.

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 170011Z Aug 61.

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17, 19  
Aug 61 CHMAAG Laos, in a "speculative analysis" submitted to CINCPAC on 17 August, warned that the current situation in Laos demanded "increased watchfulness" for indications that the RLG would attempt to bring about US intervention. There had already been a series of FAL actions, CHMAAG said, indicating that such an attempt would be made. The FAL had "shifted its weight" to the South; and several new commanders had been appointed. Interestingly, "spontaneous interest" had been shown in the creation and training of guerrilla and auto defense choc (ADC) units in the north, while the units in the south engaged in conventional training. Moreover, the FAL had increased significantly its liaison with the Thai and South Vietnamese armies. These and other happenings had been and would be watched closely by the MAAG.

On 19 August, the Secretary of State, disturbed by CHMAAG's report, told Ambassador Brown that Phoumi must be made to understand that "any unilateral action on his part designed to lead to resumption of hostilities would be

strongly



strongly opposed by the USG[overnment] and considered a breach of faith . . . ."

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 141302, 18 Aug 61; SecState to Vientiane, 184, 19 Aug 61.

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17, 22  
Aug 61

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Harriman expressed the hope that Ambassador Brown would see Soviet Ambassador Abramov in Laos and impress upon him that a coalition government in Laos could be formed only if the Pathet Lao would cease their "exorbitant demands" and agree to accept a minority status. The Soviets should be told that the Pathet Lao could not shoot their way into a "pre-dominant position" in the coalition government. If the Soviets, Harriman added, sincerely desired the early establishment of such a government, they must exert continual influence on the Pathet Lao.

On 22 August Ambassador Brown, after informing the Secretary of State that Harriman's message from Geneva had been delayed, expressed the belief that he should have further guidance before approaching Abramov on the points enumerated in Harriman's cable.

Ambassador Brown considered there was validity to Harriman's statements concerning the PL's "'exorbitant demands'" and the PL's attempts to gain "'predominant position'" only if the PL was regarded as not really distinguishable from Souvanna's "'neutralist'" forces. The only demands which the PL "as such" had made in connection with a provisional government had been 1) that Souvanna must be the Prime Minister, and 2) that the government must be simply an enlargement of Souvanna's "'legal'" government.

In Brown's

In Brown's opinion, the PL's main interest in a provisional government was to gain a foothold and weight in the new government sufficient to press successfully for early elections. The PL was apparently confident that, because of their military control over much of the countryside they would emerge from elections in a dominating position in a new and more permanent government.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 529 17 Aug 61;  
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 263, 17 Aug 61; 305, 22 Aug 61.

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18 Aug 61 The Chairman, JCS, forwarded to General Taylor, at the request of General Taylor's office, a report on the status of military supplies available in Laos and Thailand to support the FAL if hostilities were resumed. The report listed the tonnage in depot of each class of supplies, the quantities of all types of weapons and ammunition, and the days of combat that could be supported by the present stocks of each class of supplies. There were presently no critical shortages for approved MAP units in Laos, the Chairman said; however, Phoumi was creating and equipping unauthorized units and thereby siphoning off supplies.

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(TS) CM-337-61 to Gen. Taylor, 18 Aug 61; JMF 9155.2/31 (8 Aug 61) (2).

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19 Aug 61 Phoumi formally requested of CHMAAG that the US approve and provide support for the following augmentation of Lao armed forces:

Regular

	<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Current Authorization</u>
Regular forces	55,934	(38,478)
<u>Auto defense choc</u> (ADC)	15,400	(13,800)
<u>Auto defense ordinaire</u> (ADO)	--	(16,000)
Total	71,334	(68,278)

In his request, Phoumi informed the US for the first time that the ADO forces had in fact been dissolved as of 1 January 1961 (see items 23 October and 29 November 1961). He also showed a keen recognition that leadership was the most serious FAL deficiency and indicated that he would accept Thai cadres to advise FAL units down to the squad level.

(See items 26 and 29 August 1961 et seq. for US actions in regard to encadrement of the FAL. See item 9 September for CINCPAC's recommendations on the force augmentation.)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 142196, 21 Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 148603, 9 Sep 61.

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19 Aug 61 In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reported on a conversation that had taken place between British Ambassador Addis and Indian Ambassador Ratnam. According to Addis, Ratnam had said that Abramov, the Soviet Ambassador, had commented to him that there were a number of world problems between the Soviets and the United States. Berlin, the Congo, Bizerte, Cuba, and Laos. Of these, Abramov reportedly had said, Laos was the "easiest." Therefore, the Soviets intended to "solve Laos first," because of its "effect on other issues."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 279, 19 Aug 61.

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Soviet

19 Aug 61 Soviet Ambassador Abramov called upon the King at Vientiane, and delivered a three-point message: the USSR backed Souvanna fully; a government of national union must be formed quickly; and the USSR desired a neutral Laos. The Soviet emissary was friendly and respectful during his audience, demanding nothing and hinting that "some results would shortly come out of Geneva." His "soft approach" mystified the King, Boun Oum, and Phoumi.

Later the same day, the Soviet Ambassador called upon US Ambassador Brown. The Soviet diplomat, whom Brown characterized as exuding "affability and good-fellowship," expressed his belief that the Geneva Conference had made substantial progress and predicted that a cease-fire agreement would be signed in two or three weeks. When Ambassador Brown outlined the US interpretation of "neutrality" and stated his government's position regarding an international control body, Abramov stated that he agreed and that the Soviet Union desired an independent, neutral, and united Laos. The Soviet Ambassador warned, however, that Phoumi would not be accepted in the new Laotian Government unless he cooperated with its neutral policies.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 278, and 283, 19 Aug 61.

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21 Aug 61 The US Ambassador in Vientiane requested the comments of the Secretary of State on a plan, prepared at the Ambassador request by the USOM adviser on police and public safety matters, which provided for the reorganization of the Lao national police force. This plan, not yet shown to Phoumi, had elicited varying reactions among the members of the US Country Team. The director of the overseas mission in particular

particular had expressed strong reservations as to the practicability of trying to put the plan into effect at this time.

The basic plan.

1. The so-called "Ryan Plan" provided for the re-establishment under the Minister of Interior of a 3,200-man police force, ultimately to be expanded in strength to 6,000. The largest component of the proposed force was the provincial police, which eventually would consist of 3,590 men. This group was to be responsible for the vital task of putting down subversion in rural areas.

2. The estimated non-recurring cost was \$3.5 million, while the annual recurring costs were estimated as \$5.3 million.

3. The recruiting, at the rate of 250 per month, and on-the-job training of additional Lao policemen, the recruiting of 17 US technicians, and the procurement of materials were planned for a 12-month period. The time limit however, could be extended if necessary.

4. After the entire staff of a proposed national police academy had been fully trained, a task expected to take two and one-half to three years, it would no longer be necessary to rely upon on-the-job training for recruits.

Prerequisites to the implementation of the plan. Before the plan could be put into effect, the RLG would have to agree in writing to the following:

1. Return of the national police to control of the Minister of Interior

2. Procurement within 12 months of 2,800 men for integration into the police force.

3. Return to police control of as much as possible of former equipment.

4. Measures

4. Measures to "prevent unwarranted 'evaporation' of either [police] funds or material."

5. End-use audits by the USOM, when required.

6. Approval by both the director of police, or his deputy, and the Chief, Public Safety Division, USOM, of all large payments from USOM funds and of all building contracts involving USOM-provided funds.

Assumptions upon which the plan was based.

1. Any coalition government would either be friendly enough to the US to agree to such a plan or, at the least, reluctant to discard the plan if it were already in operation.

2. If no coalition could be formed and the country was divided, the need for a national police of this type would be even greater.

3. France would not be engaged in the development of a Lao national gendarmerie.

4. If a representative of the Pathet Lao became Minister of Interior, the program would have to be either terminated or altered.

(See item 31 August 1961).

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 294, 21 Aug 61.

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21 Aug 61 Ambassador Young informed the Secretary of State that the Soviet Embassy in Bangkok had delivered a "strong" note on the Laotian situation to the Thai Foreign Office. The note, after attacking "US imperialists" and claiming that the USSR wanted a neutral Laos, 1) demanded that the three Lao political "'powers'" be permitted to settle the coalition question among themselves, and 2) warned that if the RTG continued to support the Phoumi forces, the situation "'would be fraught

be fraught with most serious consequences for Thailand.'"

(The contents of the Soviet note had been orally presented by the Soviet chargé to Foreign Minister Thanat on 10 August; the note itself was delivered a "few days" later).

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(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 264, 21 Aug 61.

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21 Aug 61 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC argued against US support of Souvanna as Prime Minister.

In the early spring of 1961, CINCPAC related, the "hard" Communist line in Laos, based on military successes there, had been accompanied by a "comparatively soft" SEATO and US line. However, when the US and SEATO took firm action in April 1961--such action as activating the US Element SEATO Field Forces, concentrating 7th Fleet units in the South China Sea, and reinforcing the FAL with Thai personnel and equipment--the Communists, despite their undoubted military superiority in Laos, agreed to a cease-fire. Their failure to continue the offensive, CINCPAC thought, "must be a reflection of their real concern that to do so would trigger SEATO or other US sponsored military reaction."

During the next few weeks, CINCPAC continued, the "major issue" would be "whether the US intends to win in Laos or to surrender by compromise"; and the "most important indication to the Southeast Asians" of a US defeat would be the appointment of Souvanna, the "chosen instrument" of the Communist Bloc, as Prime Minister.

The US, CINCPAC argued in conclusion, could gain by "further hardening" its position in Laos, and giving the "full measure" of its support to Phoumi, the one Lao leader who "has stood the test of time and adversity."

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 142178, 21 Aug 61.

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22 Aug 61 The JCS, adopting the recommendations of CHMAAG Laos (see item 10 June and 14, 15 August 1961) and CINCPAC, requested that the Secretary of Defense approve the augmentation of MAAG Laos by 10 additional WSMTTs (increasing the WSMTT forces from 166 to 330 men). (See item 26 and 29 August 1961.)

(On 30 August, the Secretary of Defense approved this recommendation.)

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(TS) JCSM-575-61 to SecDef, 22 Aug 61, derived from JCS 2344/8, 17 Aug 61. (TS) 2nd N/H of JCS 234418, 13 Sep 61. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140450Z Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 139985, 14 Aug 61; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 138633, 9 Aug 61. All in JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61).

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22 Aug 61 At the request of the Department of State, the US Ambassador to Thailand submitted his assessment of the status of SEATO. Since its inception, the Ambassador said, SEATO had been an "unnatural hybrid organization," beset with "internal inconsistencies" and with a "basic antagonism" between the French and the Asian members. Lately, moreover, it had been "downgraded by inaction and contempt to the point of sterility and futility."

The US should not, however, Ambassador Young recommended, desert SEATO at this time. First of all, there was "no immediate alternative that would not entail unacceptable risk of future serious decline in US prestige and increased weakening of Southeast Asia." And second, SEATO retained some "assets": it was the legal framework of the US commitment to defend Southeast Asia; and its Asian and Pacific members were "relatively cooperative" with the US.

Since,



Since, said Ambassador Young, the basic weakness of the alliance was the membership of France, the US should consider "whether the French would tactfully disengage from SEATO." If France would not withdraw from the alliance, the US should secure an "explicit understanding" that France would not veto "operations even if they cannot join them."

The US should, the Ambassador said, take the initiative in directing SEATO's attention toward four basic problems: 1) French membership; 2) a "social action system" to immunize the peoples of Southeast Asia against Communist blandishments; 3) a delineation of and planning for a "military defense perimeter," from South Viet Nam to East Pakistan, against the "inevitable Chinese push to Indonesia and Australia"; and 4) a solution in Laos that would retain anti-Communist control of at least those areas adjoining South Viet Nam and Thailand.

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 274, 22 Aug 61.

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22, 25  
Aug 61

On 22 August CINCPAC set forth to CHMAAG Laos the current concept for logistical support of the MAAG and FAL. The concept consisted of three basic objectives:

1. To fill requirements for supplies and equipment for FAL troop units.
2. To meet the current requirements for training and "small scale combat operations."
3. To provide a 30-day war reserve in Thailand, with all withdrawals controlled by CINCPAC (Project SALT SHAKER).

CHMAAG, with Ambassador Brown's concurrence, replied on 25 August that CINCPAC's supply concept was "entirely adequate." Equally as important as the quantity of supplies however, CHMAAG noted, was the control, distribution, and safeguarding

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safeguarding of them. At present, the US had no control over materiel once it arrived in Laos. Much equipment was siphoned off to "units which Phoumi creates at the drop of a hat"; consequently, authorized units were always short of equipment. With resumption of hostilities possibly imminent and "time running out," the most effective solution for FAL logistics would be for the US to "move in and run it." In this way, the US would not only ensure effective logistical operations in Laos; the US would also erect a major barrier to Phoumi's creating further unauthorized units.

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(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 142448, 22 Aug 61; Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 144137, 26 Aug 61.

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24 Aug 61 The JCS informed CINCPAC and CHMAAG Laos that the US desired that Lao T-6 strikes be conducted only against enemy forces that were violating the cease-fire. The JCS, therefore, desired to be informed immediately of each T-6 strike, and the character of the enemy action against which it had been directed. (See item 27 August 1961.)

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1243, 24 Aug 61.

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24 Aug 61 Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, almost for the first time, he had had what might be considered a "genuine" consultation with Phoumi. The Laotian General had opened the conversation by asking, in effect, whether the US was still determined to find a political solution by negotiation. At the Ban Namone meetings, Phoumi reported, the other side was continuing to insist on the acceptance of Souvanna as the sole candidate for Prime Minister. In addition, they were insisting that the King

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should be presented with a full state of ministers so that, virtually, he would be handed a Prime Minister and a government for his approval, but without any choice on his part.

The RLG insisted, Phoumi declared, that the King must have some choice of "Prime Ministers." Phoumi felt that any government under Souvanna would simply be an instrument of the PL and would not work for the best interest of Laos.

In reply to Ambassador Brown's question regarding an alternative to a coalition government under Souvanna, Phoumi said that there were two. One was a government under the King--this was a "real possibility," provided the Western friends of Laos would support it fully. Ambassador Brown expressed serious doubts not only as to whether the King would consent to be the Prime Minister but also whether the other side would accept him in this position. Agreeing with Brown on the latter point, Phoumi suggested that if it were clear that a government under Souvanna was ruled out, the King as PM might be considered, although, he added, the King would want to know whether he could count on the support of the United States. The US Ambassador reiterated that the US was prepared to support any sovereign government which was agreed upon and which gave assurance of being independent and not dominated by Communists. This included, the Ambassador went on, a government under the prime ministership of the King, if the King decided to act in this capacity.

The second alternative, Phoumi said, was to drop the Ban Namone talks--drop Souvanna--and have direct negotiations between Boun Oum and Souphanouvong. Getting "rid of the neutralists" would permit direct confrontation with the enemy to try to work out some kind of solution, Phoumi added. In response to Brown's question on who would be a possible PM

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emerging from such negotiations, the Laotian General said they they might be able to agree on some lesser figure, like Kou Abhay.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 318, 24 Aug 61.

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24-27  
Aug 61

The Secretary of State on 24 August informed the US Embassies in Vientiane, Bangkok, Saigon, London, Paris, and Geneva that recent conversations with Soviet diplomats in Geneva, as well as in Laos (see item 19 August 1961), could indicate either a new line of Soviet diplomatic and political action or an effort to create false hopes in the non-Communist countries, thus putting the West at a psychological disadvantage when the Pathet Lao resumed hostilities. The Ambassadors were reminded that: 1) if the Pathet Lao forces remained intact, they would emerge following a political settlement as the dominant military power in Laos; 2) the activities of the ICC, as presently visualized, could not inconvenience the Communists, since the work of training and equipping the Pathet Lao had reached the point where Soviet and Viet Minh personnel could be withdrawn and supply activities halted; and 3) Souphanouvaong was reported to be seeking to prevent integration of the Pathet Lao contingent into a national army until after the general election.

Because of the danger posed by the Pathet Lao forces, the Secretary of State considered it important that, prior to the elections, an integrated national army be organized and made subject to the control of the provisional government. Therefore, the US Ambassador in Vientiane was to join his British and French colleagues in a study of the problems of integration and demobilization (see item 20 October 1961).

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The US Ambassadors in Paris and London were to discuss with the French and British Foreign Offices the US concern over the possibility that the Soviets were waging a psychological campaign and point out the importance of analyzing the demobilization and integration problems. The other addressees were to discuss with appropriate officials the importance of early action to bring about negotiations on the reconstitution of a Lao Army and the disbandment of the Pathet Lao irregular forces.

In response to the Secretary of State's message, Ambassador Brown on 26 August warned that the introduction of such a controversial issue into the Ban Namone talks would delay the formation of a provisional government; for the Communists would object, and Phoumi would be given an excuse to stall the negotiations.

On 27 August, Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi had intimated to two South Vietnamese generals that his followers would not accept Souvanna. This incident led the Ambassador to believe that Phoumi would insist upon an integration agreement. In the Ambassador's opinion, Phoumi's bargaining position was not strong enough to force the Communists to accept the disbandment of the Pathet Lao forces and their integration into a national army.

Upon receiving Ambassador Brown's comments, the Secretary of State on 27 August modified his previous instructions so that the Ambassador in Vientiane might defer his approach to Phoumi pending a further analysis of the problem. In addition, the Ambassadors in Bangkok, Saigon, London, Paris, and Ottawa were to point out the desirability of obtaining agreement on an integration formula, instead of stressing more forcefully the importance of such

of such a course of action.

The Secretary of State in another message sent the same day called attention to the difficulty of controlling the Pathet Lao after the establishment of a national government, the attendant withdrawal of US military aid, and the removal of the SEATO deterrent. Thus, Communist agreement to the disbanding of Pathet Lao forces and their merger into a national army would have to be obtained before the formation of the national union, at a time when the US and the RLG still possessed some bargaining power. The logical approach seemed to be to encourage Phoumi to begin negotiations either at Ban Namone or at a meeting of the Princes, who had agreed at Zurich to the unification by the provisional government of the existing armed forces. If Ambassador Brown considered it completely impractical for Phoumi to undertake negotiations on the subject, the US and allied Ambassadors could approach Souvanna. The Secretary of State expressed his belief that some understanding on the integration of Lao forces was necessary before the US could support a coalition government.

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(S) Msgs, State to Vientiane, PRIORITY 202, 24 Aug 61; NIACT 208, 27 Aug 61; PRIORITY 209, 27 Aug 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 328, 26 Aug 61; 330, 27 Aug 61.

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26 Aug 61 CHMAAG Laos summarized for CINCPAC the plans for and progress of Project EKARAD - the training of Lao troops in Thailand. According to CHMAAG, EKARAD, when completed sometime in 1962 would have achieved:

1. 6 weeks training for 8 infantry battalions.
2. 12 weeks training for 6 artillery batteries.
3. 8 weeks training for 1000 recruits.

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To date, the 7th, 8th, and 9th Infantry Battalions (1766 men) had completed EKARAD and returned to Laos; the 28th Infantry Battalion was currently in training.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 144769, 29 Aug 61.

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26 Aug 61

[REDACTED]

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26 Aug 61 At a meeting in South Viet Nam, Phoumi and General Khanh, Chief of Staff of the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN), agreed inter alia that the location of Lao and Vietnamese border posts and related border activities should be coordinated between the two countries. (CINCPAC had earlier reported that Phoumi planned to man his border posts with Lao guides for Vietnamese pursuit forces.)

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 331, 27 Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 182156Z Aug 61.

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26 Aug 61 The JCS informed CINCPAC that the Joint Staff was considering, in anticipation of increased Communist activity at the end of the rainy season, actions that could be taken to "stiffen" the FAL. Among the actions being discussed was further augmentation of both US and Thai military advisers. The JCS requested CINCPAC's comments on:

1. Providing

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1. Providing US and Thai advisers down to the company/battery level (the JCS estimated that 1025 advisers would be necessary); and the advisability of requesting the Thai to furnish 500 of these advisers.

2. The use of Thai officers and NCOs (approximately 2500) to cadre the FAL down to the platoon or squad level.

(See items 29 August, 2 and 7 September, and 11 October 1961.)

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1267, 26 Aug 61; JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61).

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26 Aug 61 The US delegation to the Geneva Conference reported to the Secretary of State that the past week's debate on the terms of reference for the ICC had revealed differences within the Sino-Soviet Bloc. Although the Communist Chinese, Viet Minh, and Pathet Lao representatives had voiced violent objection to US statements concerning a strengthened ICC, the Soviet and Polish delegations remained silent. The US delegation, by refraining from direct attack upon the Soviets and by engaging in private conversations with them, had sought to exploit whatever differences might exist. The Soviets and Poles finally proposed agreement in principle to the US text and its referral to the drafting committee, thus forcing the Communist Chinese representative to reverse his stand. This Soviet maneuver was, according to the US delegation, "attended by ill-concealed argument in the conference room and in the lounge between the Soviet and CHICOM delegations."

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 558, 26 Aug 61.

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27 Aug 61 CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that RT-33 reconnaissance, both photographic and "eyeball," be authorized, in order to assess the enemy build-up in the Vang Vieng area. CINCPAC proposed the use of RT-33's rather than RB-26's because of their smaller size and greater speed and range.

(See NSAM 80, item 29 August 1961.)

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270050Z Aug 61.

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27 Aug 61 CHMAAG Laos acknowledged the JCS instructions regarding Lao T-6 missions (see item 24 August 1961). At the same time, CHMAAG emphasized that "Phoumi takes orders from no one on employment of the FAL. He makes his own decisions on the employment of T-6s without reference to this headquarters." Phoumi had assured CHMAAG, however, that the T-6s were being used for defensive purposes only; this had been substantiated. CHMAAG said, wherever MAAG personnel had been able to review the results of missions.

[Henceforward, in accordance with the instructions, CHMAAG informed CINCPAC and the JCS of each T-6 mission of which he gained knowledge.]

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(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 144330, 27 Aug 61.

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28, 29  
Aug 61

Ambassador Brown on 28 August informed the Secretary of State that French Ambassador Falaize had called on Souvanna at Xieng Khouang on 27 August and had outlined the US-UK-French foreign ministers' conditions for support of a national union government which might be presided over by Souvanna (see item 7 August 1961). The four major considerations were:

1. Composition of Future Government.

In response to Falaize's statement that the cabinet should be formed with a large center group, and no key

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portfolios should go to the extreme leftists, Souvanna said he contemplated an 8-4-4 distribution of portfolios, with four each to the PL and Vientiane groups, and eight of the center group to be chosen from his own supporters. He agreed that the PL should not hold Foreign Affairs, Defense or Interior. Phoumi Nosavan might get a "'Big Ministry of the Plan'" or possibly Foreign Affairs. Referring to the subject of elections, Souvanna said that they would not be held before January, but added that they would take place when he was "ready."

2. ICC

Souvanna agreed that the ICC should have its own equipment and facilities. Furthermore, he stated that although the ICC would have to obtain permission from the Lao Government to carry out its investigations, this permission would never be withheld.

3. Army

The Laotian Prince agreed on the need for general demobilization and for the evolution of the armed forces into a simple "'police force.'" The mechanics of demobilization, he said, would be worked out by a three-party committee.

4. French Military Presence.

Souvanna assented to continued French military presence in Laos and indicated that the PL would also agree.

On the following day, in a message to Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Brown commented on the Falaize-Souvanna interview. He characterized Souvanna's responses as "profoundly discouraging," "unsatisfactorily vague," "naive," "not satisfactory." It was Brown's feeling that Souvanna should be pressed more explicitly on the subjects which had been covered in the Xieng Khouang interview.

Secretary

Secretary Rusk, agreeing with Brown's analysis of Souvanna's statements, instructed the US Ambassador to immediately invite Souvanna to meet with him and Ambassador Harriman in Paris as soon as possible in order that the US-UK-French foreign ministers' conditions for support of Souvanna as Prime Minister of a neutral Lao government might be discussed in detail.

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(S) Msgs. Vientiane to SecState, 340, 28 Aug 61; 343 29 Aug 61; (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 215, 29 Aug 61.

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29 Aug 61 At a meeting on Southeast Asia, the President approved the following actions:

1. "An intensification of the diplomatic effort to achieve agreement to the Paris proposals on the part of Souvanna, especially by direct conversations between Ambassador Harriman and Souvanna, with an emphasis not only upon the interlocking importance of the Paris proposals, but also upon US support of Souvanna in the event that he accepts the Paris plan." (See item 15-17 September 1961.)

2. "Authorization to undertake conversations with SEATO allies both bilaterally and with the SEATO Council, exploring the possibility of an enlargement of the concept of SEATO Plan 5" (see items 2 and 6 September 1961). It would be made clear to the SEATO Allies that this exploration was in the nature of contingency planning and did not represent a flat commitment of the United States to participate in such an enlarged enterprise.

3. "An immediate increase in mobile training teams in Laos to include advisers down to the level of the company, to a total US strength in this area of 500, [REDACTED]

Thais

[REDACTED] (The JCS, believing that 1,000 advisers would be the minimum requirement for encadrement of the FAL - see item 26 August 1961 - had agreed on 25 August to seek governmental approval for the US to provide one-half of the number [REDACTED])

[REDACTED] (See items 2 September and 11 October 1961.)

4. "An immediate increase of 2,000 in the number of Meos being supported to bring the total to a level of 11,000." (See item 24 October 1961.)

5. [REDACTED] (See item 5 September 1961.)

(On 1 September, the Secretary of Defense assigned to the JCS the responsibility for follow-up on the actions set forth in paragraphs 3 and 5 above.)

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(S) NSAM No. 80, 29 Aug 61, att to JCS 2339/18, 30 Aug 61; (S) Memo, SecDef to SecArmy, et al., 1 Sep 61, att to JCS 2339/19. All in JMF 9150/3100 (29 Aug 61).

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29 Aug 61 CHMAAG Laos, in response to the JCS query of 26 August (see item), provided CINCPAC with the views of the MAAG on the best manner for encadrement of the FAL. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Further, CHMAAG believed encadrement by US personnel of the volunteer and ADC units of the FAL would be of "low value" given the dispersion, employment, and non-conformity to US standards of these units. Therefore, CHMAAG said

said, the encadrement should be organized as follows:

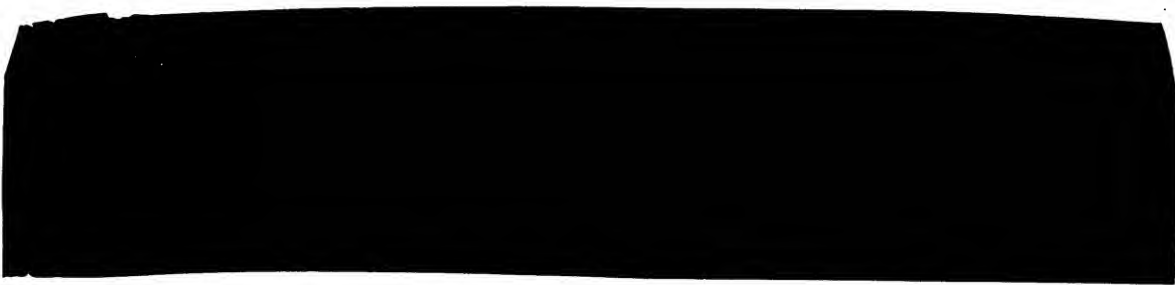
1. All special forces detachments should transfer their attention to organizing, training, and guiding volunteer and ADC units in counter-guerrilla and guerrilla operations.

2. Cadres should be provided only to those elements of the FAL whose functions conformed generally to the functions of US and Thai conventional forces.

3.



4. Above the GM level, the MAAG was already amply manned to influence properly FAL command and staff actions; a notable exception, however, was in MAAG influence upon logistical support.



(See item 7 September 1961.)

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(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 152176, 19 Sep 61.

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29 Aug 61 CHMAAG Laos pointed out to CINCPAC, the JCS, the Secretary of Defense, and others, that the French had "for all intents and purposes" denied the use of Seno airfield to the US and RLG since the cease-fire. In the event hostilities resumed,

CHMAAG

CHMAAG said, it would be "vital" that the US have unrestricted use of Seno; the nearby Savannakhet field would be completely inadequate. CHMAAG urged that negotiation with the French be undertaken immediately to insure that Seno would be available if needed.

(On 2 September, CINCPAC, commenting on CHMAAG's recommendation, pointed out that France had already agreed to the use of Seno by SEATO Plan 5 forces.) (See item 13 October 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC et al., DA IN 144773, 29 Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 146719, 3 Sep 61.

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29 Aug 61

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] relocating the Meo tribesmen of Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces, if such a resettlement were to be considered. [REDACTED] 1) the mountain range along the Laos-Viet Nam border, where the Meo could harass the DRV; 2) Sayaboury province (west of Luang Prabang), where they could help secure the Laos-Thailand border; and 3) the Bolovens plateau in southern Laos.

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[REDACTED]

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29 Aug 61 The US Ambassador in Vientiane, CHMAAG Laos, USARMA Vientiane, [REDACTED] submitted to the Secretary of State their joint proposal for regrouping Lao armed forces, creation of a new Lao national army, and dissolution of excess forces. The US officials assumed for the purposes of this plan, that: 1) a neutral coalition government representing all parties had been formed; 2) all foreign forces except agreed advisory personnel had been withdrawn; 3) the Ministry of National Security

Security would be responsive to the government, and all armed forces would be responsive to the Ministry; 4) the organizational structure of the integrated force would be determined by the coalition government, but the force ceiling would be established by international agreement; 5) representation in the new army would be based on each faction's percentage of current troop strength in Laos; 6) the government, with ICC assistance, would be able to implement the regrouping, reorganizing, and disbanding of forces; and 7) amnesty would be granted to all demobilized forces. After lengthy discussion of the political and geographical hazards of any plan of this type and of the pro and con of several available alternative means, the US officials recommended that the reconstitution take the following shape:

- (1) The constitution of a new Lao army should be phased by first relocating the forces, second integrating Kong Le forces into the RLG forces and later the PL into the RLG-KL force, and third dissolving the excess forces.
- (2) Regroup the forces of each faction at holding points designated in each military region to facilitate control and supervision during integration and the period of disarmament of the excess forces.
- (3) Determine the strength of the various factions by actual count at the holding points and declare any other forces continuing to operate as outlaw forces.
- (4) Integrate by battalions and separate company as much as possible to isolate PL influence in the new army.
- (5) Disarm and disband the excess forces after integration so the new army can assist in the process of disarming and disbanding them.
- (6) Control entire operation with a central and regional military committees constituted on same percentage basis as fixed for basic integration and working under the authority of Min Sec and through the military chain of command.

(See item 20 October 1961.)

In

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 350, 29 Aug 61.

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29 Aug 61 In response to a request for information by the Department of State, the Laos Country Team reviewed the progress and costs of FAL military civil action activities.

According to FAL reports, 414 civil affairs teams had been organized prior to August 1960 for the purpose of providing psychological indoctrination and civil assistance to villagers. Of this total, however, the Country Team estimates that only 10 to 15 per cent were actually employed by the FAL. Following the Kong Le coup, all of the ill-trained civil affairs teams were disbanded and the personnel recalled to combat units.

On 28 July 1961, Phoumi approved the re-establishment of military civil affairs teams capable of operating in areas denied to civilian teams by Pathet Lao activities. A school, supervised by the MAAG Civil Affairs Officer, was to be set up to train 20 operational 8-man teams by April 1962.

The RLG Director of National Coordination, to whom Phoumi had assigned responsibility for the program, agreed to organize a psychological services battalion with psychological warfare, troop information, and civil affairs companies. During August, a US civil affairs mobile training team arrived to establish the training school. The first Lao civil affairs team leaders were scheduled to complete their training by October.

According to the concept approved by the Director of National Coordination, the military civil affairs teams would follow combat units during clearing operations and, in addition to making surveys of public safety conditions, would provide the villagers with medical, agricultural, and educational



educational support and advice. Thus, the military civil affairs teams would complement the work of several other US and RLG civilian and paramilitary organizations which also were engaged in civil assistance activities.

These other organizations included: 1) the USOM, the primary US civil assistance group, which operated only in cleared areas; 2) the USIS, which offered a program of material assistance and psychological indoctrination, primarily to villagers dwelling in cleared areas; 3) Lao civil-military coordination committees, paramilitary organizations designed to offer, generally in cleared areas, both political indoctrination and some degree of civil assistance; and 4) White Star Mobile Training Teams, which would serve as contact points and overseers of civilian aid in the areas where they were operating. The Lao paramilitary program, however, was just getting underway, and the US program of utilizing White Star teams was still being prepared.

Turning to the cost of civil assistance activities, the Country Team stated that during FY 1961 the FAL had been given almost \$.3 million in defense support funds for "rural affairs." A portion of this sum was used; but, although the US continued its assistance, the FAL made no allocations for civil affairs activities after the Kong Le coup. A sum of about \$.1 million in defense support funds was budgeted for civil assistance during FY 1962. Because the re-establishment of military civil affairs teams was just beginning, the first budget requirements probably would not arise until September 1961.

No allocation of MAP funds was made for civil assistance during FY 1961, but funds had been requested for the establishment during FY 1962 of a psychological services battalion that

that contained a civil affairs company. The 1962 budget, however, had not yet been approved.

The defense support budget for FY 1962 included funds for 300 6-man teams and for the purchase of medical supplies to be used in the civil assistance program. Because far fewer than 300 military civil affairs teams would be trained, CHMAA had requested CINCPAC to reduce the civil affairs portion of the defense support budget by some \$73,000.

The Country Team now suggested a \$40,000 increase in MAP funds for the procurement of medical supplies for the civil affairs program, in order to give the MAAG much better control over expenditures for such supplies and to insure "better supply at less cost."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 344, 29 Aug 61.

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29 Aug,  
2, 11  
Sep 61

On 29 August, CINCPAC requested that an additional 30 Filipino engineering equipment mechanics be authorized for Laos. These technicians would be in addition to the recently authorized augmentation of 76 (see item 24, 28 July 1961).

On 2 September, CINCPAC requested that 4 more Filipinos be authorized to operate the expanded radio transmissions that formed part of the growing RLG psychological warfare effort.

On 11 September, the Department of Defense approved both of these requests.

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(C) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 290023Z Aug 61; CINCPAC to JCS DA IN 146600, 2 Sep 61; OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 902367, 11 Sep 61

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CINCPAC

30 Aug 61 CINCPAC suggested to the JCS that, against the contingency that the Communists resumed their offensive in Laos and the RLG appealed for US or SEATO intervention, four decisions were needed as guidance for the US or SEATO response, as follows:

1. The US and its Allies should decide "what plan of action" they would execute. The chosen plan should contain "an agreed concept for operations involving specific forces under a preplanned command arrangement"; SEATO Plan 5, CINCPAC noted, was the only plan that met these requirements.

2. A decision was needed on the military objectives to be attained by the intervention. CINCPAC suggested either a reaffirmation of the objectives as stated in Plan 5 or another statement of them. He hoped, however, that any new statement would call for more than restoration of the cease-fire line, for the achievement of such an objective would result in a de facto partition of Laos.

3. Rules of engagement or constraint should be developed. The military commander of the intervention should know the "level of violence" to be employed in carrying out his mission, and he should know what retaliation he could make against various possible DRV actions. Also, criteria should be established for possible use of nuclear weapons.

4. The US should ascertain which Allies would participate in the intervention, so that account could be taken of their attitudes and wishes in deciding the objectives and weaponry of the intervention force.

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 300410Z Aug 61.

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31 Aug 61 The US Ambassador in Vientiane, in a message to the Secretary of State, offered the Laos Country Team's further considerations of the Ryan Plan (see item 21 August 1961) and

his

his own views on the subject. The Country Team had concluded that the plan itself appeared both technically sound and capable of providing the kind of police force necessary to the kingdom. Specifically, the plan would create a provincial police force able to insure the security of rural settlements a task performed unsatisfactorily by military forces, and capable of maintaining the prestige and authority of the national government in the widest possible area of Laos.

Although in agreement concerning the plan, the Country Team could not agree on the timing of its implementation. Those who believed the plan should not go into effect at once argued that: 1) the cost, at a time when the Ministers of Defense and Finance were seeking additional US military and budgetary aid, might appear excessive; 2) since the army would have to provide men to augment the police force, competition for trained manpower would develop with possible harm to both organizations; 3) implementation of the Ryan Plan might provide a private army for Phoumi, who had made it clear that he intended to retain personal control over the police; 4) political uncertainties were too great; and 5) implementation of the plan would raise substantial administrative problems for USOM, would "tend to vitiate the USOM/Laos Task Force concept," and would subordinate the modest US program of economic aid to a program "frankly designed" to create a strong paramilitary force.

Those who favored implementing the plan at the present time maintained that: 1) however the admittedly vague political situation was resolved, the presence of a basically non-Communist police force would be to the advantage of the US; 2) a police force based on the Ryan Plan might survive the transition to a neutral government; 3) the proposed

program

program, since it was directed in part at halting subversion in rural areas, should appeal to Phoumi and win his complete support; and 4) waiting would only permit Phoumi to retain the police within the FAL until the police force ceased to exist as an effective organization.

The Ambassador himself believed that the Ryan Plan was intrinsically sound and capable of meeting a basic need. He further believed it important to restore to the kingdom an independent police force under civilian control. Thus, the Ambassador recommended that the plan be speedily and favorably considered so that it could be presented to Phoumi and, provided he accepted the necessary conditions, put into effect (see item 8 October 1961).

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 371, 31 Aug 61.

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31 Aug 61 The Secretary of State sent instructions to guide Ambassador Harriman in his forthcoming talks with Souvanna (see item 15-17 September 1961). These instructions dealt with the problem of integrating the various Laotian armed forces, the proposed line of discussion with Souvanna, and a list of issues considered crucial by the three foreign ministers at their Paris meeting (see item 7 August 1961). In addition, Ambassador Harriman was informed that Souvanna would raise no objection to the continued French presence and instructed to define and interpret for Souvanna any areas of disagreement between the US and the Prince.

The integration of Lao forces. Ambassador Harriman was informed that, because of differences of opinion among the US, UK, and France, he should seek "approval in substance" from the British and French of that portion of his instructions dealing with the integration of Lao forces. Subject to this

this condition, Ambassador Harriman was to seek agreement among the Laotian factions on a formula for the proportional integration of forces. There were, according to the Secretary of State, three possible methods of integrating the FAL, Kong Le, and Pathet Lao contingents. The troops presently under arms might: 1) remain in their present locations while agreed numbers were integrated and the remainder demobilized; 2) regroup in certain specified regions for integration and demobilization; or 3) assemble for these purposes at selected points in the various provinces. With respect to the integration machinery, the Secretary of State desired to know what system of regional administration was envisioned under the vague terms of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961). Specifically, he wanted to know whether the Prime Minister would "run the whole country" or whether there would be "two sets of organs of administration that would each be in charge of a particular segment of the country."

Proposed line of discussion. The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Harriman to emphasize that Souvanna was "one man who could, if he chose, bring about the transformation of the situation from dangerous and explosive stalemate to a condition where reunification of the country and progress toward stability were possible." Should Souvanna break with the Pathet Lao and seek the true neutrality and independence of Laos, the US would give him full support "including assistance for economic and social development." At this point, Ambassador Harriman was to warn that freedom from outside interference was the key to neutrality and that to maintain such freedom Laos would have to prevent the infiltration of Viet Minh troops through the kingdom. Since Souvanna would need all the "friendly international backing" he could get in sealing the borders, an  
"adequate"

"adequate" ICC was "vitally important." Finally, Souvanna was to be reminded of the disastrous results which would follow a Pathet Lao take-over and of the fact that the US would "have nothing to do" with a government that "knowingly or unwittingly" yielded to Communist domination.

Issues raised by the Foreign Ministers. Secretary Rusk observed that the three foreign ministers had agreed that, if a Souvanna coalition was to preserve the neutrality of Laos, the Prince would have to commit himself to satisfactory positions on certain crucial issues. Because of Souvanna's disappointing response to French questioning on these issues (see item 28 August 1961), Ambassador Harriman was to discuss with him: 1) the creation within the cabinet of a neutral center group made up of political moderates from throughout the kingdom; 2) the need to integrate Pathet Lao military forces and to organize a non-Communist political party before holding elections; 3) assurance that the Lao government would never interfere with ICC investigations; and 4) Souvanna's views on the integration and demobilization of factional armies.

(On 3 September, Ambassador Harriman obtained British consent to that portion of his instructions which dealt with the integration of factional armies. The French agreed on the next day.

During his conversation with the British, the question of contingency planning arose, and various military aspects of the Laotian situation were mentioned. Ambassador Harriman, on the basis of this brief discussion, reported to the Secretary of State that the UK was "agreeable without commitment to discuss contingency planning for expanding [SEATO] Plan 5." The subject of contingency planning was not mentioned to the French.)

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(S) Msg, State to London, DEPTel 1094, 31 Aug 61; (C)  
Msg, London to SecState, 916, 5 Sep 61.

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Thai

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1 Sep 61 Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman described, in a long discussion with Ambassador Young, the "malaise" that various Thai officials had exhibited during recent months. The Thai were gravely concerned that a Communist Laos would come into being and were persuaded that SEATO as now constituted did not provide Thailand the "requisite assurances" against the consequent threat to Thai borders. Thanat saw three possible courses of action: 1) Thailand would leave SEATO and "seek security through other means"; 2) those SEATO members "unwilling to take the necessary commitments" to assure the security of Southeast Asia should withdraw from SEATO; or 3) the Manila Treaty should be amended so that a country "not in the Pacific area could not veto a SEATO security action."

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 327, 1 Sep 61.

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2 Sep 61 Ambassador Young was instructed to approach Sarit, and Ambassador Nolting was instructed to approach Diem, to explain the impending Harriman-Souvanna talks (see item 15-17 September 1961) and to explore the possibility of expanding the concept of SEATO Plan 5. Although the US was keenly aware of the reservations Sarit and Diem entertained with respect to Souvanna, the Ambassadors were to say that a direct approach to Souvanna by Ambassador Harriman was regarded as an essential step in determining whether he could be Prime Minister of the RLG under terms acceptable to the US. Sarit should be asked, furthermore, to give the US his support in urging Phoumi to cooperate should Souvanna prove acceptable; Sarit should also be informed in this regard that Phoumi had been told he would not receive US support if he initiated the resumption of hostilities.

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The Ambassadors were instructed to explore an expanded concept for SEATO Plan 5 only in "general terms," emphasizing that the US undertook no commitment by reason of the exploration. The enlarged concept envisioned securing not only the Mekong valley centers, but also Luang Prabang and Sayaboury provinces, and southern Laos adjoining the South Vietnamese border. Put another way, the Plan would, while not threatening the PL-held positions in northeastern Laos, contemplate clearing the rest of Laos. The Plan would be undertaken only in response to a "clear Communist breach of the ceasefire and renewal of major offensive." It would be practicable only if the Thai were prepared to commit more forces than presently assigned to SEATO Plan 5 - probably a total of 10,000 men, and if South Viet Nam would contribute 5,000 men.

[In keeping with the redesignation of the Forces Armees du Laos (FAL) to Forces Armees du Royaume (FAR), hereafter the abbreviation FAR will be used to describe the armed forces of the RLG.]

(Both Ambassadors made their presentations on 5 September. See item 8 September 1961 for Diem's response; see items 5 September and 4 October 1961 for the Thai response.)

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(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 283; to Saigon, 269; 2 Sep 61.

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2 Sep 61 The JCS, acting upon the recommendation of CINCPAC (see item 6 August 1961) and a request by the Director of Military

Assistance

Assistance, OASD(ISA), instructed CNO to provide three helicopters for loan to the RLG and for use by the ICC. At the same time, CINCPAC was informed that he could use these helicopters for such operations as he might desire until the ICC accepted the RLG offer.

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(S) Msg, JCS to CNO et al., JCS 1360, 2 Sep 61, derived from JCS 2344/9, 25 Aug 61; (S) JCS 2344/6, 16 Aug 61; both in JMF 9155.2/4129 (6 Jun 61).

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2 Sep 61 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had provided him with additional information on the "clandestine operations" that the Lao leader planned to initiate (see item 1 July 1961). The clandestine force, commanded by Brigadier General Sing, would consist of some Meo units and elements of the 34th Volunteer Battalion. The "zone of control" for this force would be the present "enemy area of operation," plus the Lao-South Viet Nam borders. The mission of the force was twofold: 1) to conduct, in conjunction with South Vietnamese clandestine forces (see item 26 August 1961), counter-guerrilla operations in the border area; and 2) to create a "stay-behind" guerrilla force in the enemy-controlled areas. Initial operations would commence in the "near future" in the areas north and east of Kham Keut.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 147003, 5 Sep 61.

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5 Sep 61 Ambassador Young, acting as instructed (see item 2 September 1961), presented to Sarit and Thanat the rationale behind the impending approach to Souvanna (see item 15-17 September 1961), and sounded out the Thai leaders on enlargement of SEATO Plan 5 and encadrement of the FAR.

Fearful

Fearful that Sarit might pass on information to Phoumi before Ambassador Brown had approached Souvanna, Ambassador Young did not inform Sarit that Harriman would make the approach to Souvanna. Sarit's response to a direct approach to Souvanna by an unnamed US official was "not negative even though unenthusiastic." Souvanna could not be trusted, Sarit said, and his intentions would be difficult to ascertain. However, Sarit would assist the US in whatever way possible to determine these intentions.

Sarit's reaction to the enlargement of SEATO Plan 5 "as a concept without commitment" was "satisfactory," Ambassador Young reported. When queried about enlargement of the Thai force contribution, however, Sarit asked, as usual, whether US forces would also be increased. In view of this questioning attitude, Ambassador Young did not advance the specific figure of 10,000 troops mentioned in his instructions.

Neither did Ambassador Young mention specific figures in discussing encadrement, because he and CHJUSMAG doubted the wisdom of removing so many as the suggested 500 specialists (see item 29 August 1961) from the RTA. The RTA was already understrength in many specialties, Young reported; the withdrawal of too many officers and NCOs from combat units would hinder the Thai training effort and thus might work against the current US exploration of an increased Thai contribution to SEATO Plan 5. Ambassador Young requested, therefore, further instructions on how to proceed in exploring the encadrement concept with the RTG (see item 8 September 1961).

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 352, 7 Sep 61.

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5 Sep 61 The CJCS, in a memorandum for General Taylor, declared that the authorization for reconnaissance over Laos, as worded in NSAM No. 80 (see item 29 August 1961), did not satisfy the operational requirement. Thus, the Chairman, acting upon recommendations by CINCPAC (see item 27 August 1961), sought specific authorization for the use of RT-33 aircraft backed up by RB-26s [REDACTED]. Both types of planes were based in Thailand. The CJCS also recommended that these reconnaissance missions "be conducted under the operational control and as directed by CHMAAG Laos."

[REDACTED]

The JCS on 20 September informed CINCPAC that reconnaissance by RT-33 aircraft had been approved subject to final coordination by CHJUSMAG Thailand and the US Ambassador in Bangkok. The missions were to be directed by CHMAAG Laos, who was informed on 22 September by CINCPAC that the RT-33 project had been approved.)

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(S) CM-353-61 to Gen. Taylor, 5 Sep 61, OCJCS Files 091 Laos (3); [REDACTED] 14 Sep 61; (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1595, 20 Sep 61; (S) Msg CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 153500, 22 Sep 61.

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5 Sep 61 In a message to Souvanna, Prince Boun Oum, referring to the agreements reached at Zurich (see item 22 June 1961) and the conversations at Phnom Penh (see item 5 August 1961), expressed the hope that Souvanna would come to Luang Prabang as soon as possible for a three-Prince meeting.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 407, 7 Sep 61.

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6 Sep 61 The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic posts that, in accordance with the policy decisions of NSAM 80 (see item 29 August 1961), the Department of State had recently called upon the Washington representatives of the SEATO powers to explore the possibility of enlarging the concept of SEATO Plan 5. Each nation was informed of the rationale for Harriman's approach to Souvanna, the increase in US advisors, and the increase in the supported strength of the Meo. Each was also told that the US saw three possible developments in the Laotian situation: 1) success in forming a truly neutral Lao Government; 2) continuation of the present "ambiguous state"; and 3) resumption of hostilities by the Communists. The US held that, if the last possibility occurred, the most important military and political objective of the Free World would be the protection of that portion of Laos bordering on Thailand and South Viet Nam. These objectives were greater than those of SEATO Plan 5, and the US was therefore asking the other SEATO powers whether they would be "willing to consider additional commitments of forces" for an operation that, tentatively, would attempt to hold Sayaboury province (up to and including Luang Prabang city) and Vientiane province, to clear Route 9 and the Tchepone area, and to expel the Communists from northern Laos.

Only

Only the French Ambassador responded immediately for his government. He "reacted negatively," indicating that de Gaulle opposed a military solution in Laos; furthermore, he said, the increase in US advisors would probably provoke an equivalent increase in Viet Minh assistance to the PL and adversely affect the Geneva negotiations.

(Concurrent approaches were made to the Thai and South Vietnamese Governments; see item 2 September 1961.)

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(S) Msg, SecState CIRC, 407, 6 Sep 61.

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6 Sep 61 Secretary Rusk informed the American Embassy in Vientiane that (according to a report received from "other" channels in Vientiane) Prince Souvanna, in replying to Ambassador Brown's proposal to meet in Paris (see item 28, 29 August 1961), had presented three counterproposals. The third proposal--that he would meet Harriman in New Delhi, or preferably Rangoon, was acceptable to State.

Secretary Rusk instructed Brown to advise Souvanna that Harriman would meet him in Rangoon on 15 September, or as soon thereafter as possible. Ambassador Brown was to accompany Harriman. In the same message Rusk suggested to Harriman that, since it was highly desirable that Phoumi and Sarit be kept informed, he should plan brief stops in Vientiane and Bangkok after his interview with Souvanna (see items 19 and 22 September 1961).

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 233, 6 Sep 61.

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6 Sep 61 The JCS, in furtherance of the program suggested by the Secretary of Defense (see item 28 July 1961), requested CINCPAC to prepare a plan for the transfer of responsibility  
for

for Meo operations [REDACTED] to the Department of Defense. The JCS requested that CINCPAC coordinate his planning [REDACTED] and that he consider the following two alternatives: 1) the Meo would become part of the "bonafide" forces of the RLG; and 2) the Meo would not become part of the RLG and would thus require separate channels of support. (See items 29 September and 15 November 1961.)

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(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1374, 6 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61).

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6 Sep 61 The Director, Joint Staff, replied to the ISA memorandum of 12 August (see item) concerning reconstitution of the FAR. Rather than presenting formal Joint Staff views, however, the Director merely informed the ASD(ISA) that the Joint Staff was "in general agreement" with the 29 August proposals of US officials in Laos (see item). The Director also took this occasion to reaffirm as valid the 22 June sentiments of the JCS (see item): that the MAP BY 63-67 FAR force objective should be maintained for the reconstituted FAR if the US advisory group remained; and that, otherwise, the force objectives should not be decided until the political situation prevailing under the envisioned coalition government had been analyzed.

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(S) DJSM-1072-61 to ASD(ISA), 6 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (12 Aug 61).

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6 Sep 61 General Phoumi told a US Embassy officer he had informed Souvanna that the new RLG delegation would not go to Ban Namone until Souvanna and Souphanouvong, as had been agreed at Phnom Penh (see item 5 August 1961), raised the level of their respective delegations.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 397, 6 Sep 61.

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7 Sep 61 [

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 070029Z Sep 61.

7 Sep 61 During a discussion of the Falaize trip to Xieng Khouang, Ambassador Brown told General Phoumi that: 1) Souvanna's replies regarding the composition of the "'center'" group had been unsatisfactory, and 2) his ideas about elections and ICC had been too vague as had been his replies about the "highly important" question of disbanding and integrating the Pathet Lao. The problem of integration was particularly important,

Brown

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Brown said. Agreement, at least in principle, should be reached with respect to it before the government was formed, because if the subject were left entirely open the US would be faced with demands for the withdrawal of US advisors while the PL still remained in existence as an independent powerful force.

In reply, Phoumi said this matter should be dealt with by the new government. It was his opinion that PL forces should not be disbanded immediately because PL personnel would be "infiltrated" into the countryside where they could exert an effective and dangerous influence on the elections. It would be better, he declared, to have them remain in units where they could be observed, and after the new army had been formed, disbanded.

In reviewing the military situation with the US Ambassador, Phoumi displayed great satisfaction with his FAR "consolidation campaign." Although Ambassador Brown complimented Phoumi on this campaign, at the same time he urged him to keep operations at a "low key" and avoid well known or controversial points.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState 406, 7 Sep 61.

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7 Sep 61 In a conversation with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi confirmed reports that three companies of Chinese, commanded by KMT officers, were operating as regular FAR troops north of Luang Prabang (see item 18 May 1961). Ambassador Brown, pointing out the obvious political and diplomatic difficulties raised by these units, urged that these units be withdrawn or, if possible, disbanded. Phoumi replied that he recognized the political dangers involved, and that these units were  
being

being removed from the combat area. They could, Phoumi said, be disbanded at any time.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 402, 7 Sep 61.

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7 Sep 61 The JCS informed the Secretary of Defense that upon review of the recent happenings regarding Laos--the continual build-up by the PL and DRV forces and lack of progress at Geneva--they had concluded that the "resumption of overt hostilities in Laos is most probable at the end of the rainy season." The current preoccupation with the Berlin crisis had tended to obscure the issues in Southeast Asia. It was the belief of the JCS that the situation in Laos had so deteriorated that the US must take immediate and positive action to prevent "a complete Communist takeover of Laos and the ultimate loss of all Southeast Asia, to include Indonesia.

SEATO Plan 5 could be implemented, the JCS said, without adverse effect upon US capabilities for planned operations in Europe relating to Berlin. The JCS requested the Secretary to inform the President the JCS were agreed that, if an acceptable political solution was not attained prior to the resumption of overt hostilities in Laos, Plan 5 or a variation thereof should be implemented. The preparatory political and military actions should be undertaken at once.

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(TS) JCSM-611-61 to SEcDef, 7 Sep 61, derived from JCS 2344/10, 1 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2).

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7-13  
Sep 61

The Secretary of State on 7 September forwarded to Ambassador Brown the proposed text of a cease-fire agreement and expressed the hope of the US Government that Phoumi could be persuaded to introduce this draft at Ban Namone on the earliest date possible.

possible. The proposed text was based on Souvanna's draft agreement (see item 10 July 1961) and on the RLG text as amended (see item 28 July-16 August 1961). Ambassador Brown was invited to comment, prior to submitting the draft to Phoumi, upon the advisability of integrating Laotian units at the battalion level, a policy which might enable the Pathet Lao to retain control over areas where those Pathet Lao troops selected for integration were concentrated.

According to the US proposal, all troops and equipment would remain in the positions occupied on 25 April 1961. After the cease-fire agreement was signed, there could be no concentration of troops near the areas held by the opposition, no reinforcement beyond the strength existing when the agreement was signed, and no supply activities except for deliveries to specified supply points in specially marked vehicles. Each supply operation was to be reported to the ICC. The US proposal also called for the separation of opposing troops in areas where truce violations were likely to occur.

Under Article 11 of the proposed plan, the RLG, Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations would form a Joint Committee, including a Central Joint Committee and subcommittees, to put the truce into effect and carry out the integration of the military forces of all parties.

In addition, the plan provided for the regroupment of all forces in assembly areas designated by the Central Joint Committee acting in cooperation with the ICC. Once this regroupment had been completed, a subcommittee of the Joint Committee and an ICC inspection team would verify the declared strength, armament, and equipment of the troops located in each assembly area.

After

After this verification, the various factions were to cooperate with the ICC in the phased integration of their military forces into a unified army of 20,000 men. All troops in excess of this number would be demobilized.

Other features of the US plan were a program for the release and repatriation of prisoners of war and interned civilians, and a prohibition against reprisals or acts of discrimination directed at former enemies.

The ICC, along with the Joint Committee, bore the responsibility for enforcing the truce and controlling the reconstitution of the Lao armed forces. The Joint Committee was to assist the three parties in resolving disputes and in the routine implementation of the cease-fire agreement. The three factions would have equal representation throughout the committee hierarchy, and a representative of the ICC would be present at every level to engender mutual confidence and trust among the factions.

The ICC, according to the US proposal, would supervise and control the Laotian peace settlement according to conditions set forth by the Geneva Conference. In order to carry out its tasks, the ICC would enjoy freedom of movement throughout the kingdom and would be invited to establish such operating centers and mobile teams as it might consider necessary. The ICC was to receive copies of the periodic reports made to the Central Committee by the subcommittees, and the parties to the agreement also were obliged to give the ICC whatever information and assistance it might desire.

On 13 September, Ambassador Brown commented on the draft text. He admitted that the integration program would allow the Pathet Lao to retain control in the areas where that faction was strongest, but he pointed out that the RLG would  
be able

be able to hold the areas it currently controlled. In any case, the Ambassador could see no alternative to integrating most combat units at the battalion level.

Turning to other aspects of the proposal, Ambassador Brown noted that, perhaps intentionally, no procedure had been set forth by which disputes among the factions could be arbitrated.

Finally, the Ambassador suggested that 3 May, rather than 25 April, be selected as the date the cease-fire was ordered. The RLG, he believed, was not on "firm legal ground" in claiming 25 April, since all three sides had not actually issued their cease-fire orders until 3 May. Although the change in date would acknowledge the capture by the Pathet Lao of two villages, Ambassador Brown did not consider this a concession, since the Pathet Lao undoubtedly would hold the towns unless driven out by military force or deprived of them in a general peace settlement. In the Ambassador's opinion, Phoumi would probably object to the change in date as well as to the details of the integration plan.

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(S) Msgs, State to Vientiane, PRIORITY 248, 8 Sep 61; PRIORITY 249, 7 Sep 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 458, 13 Sep 61.

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8 Sep 61



(See item 22 September 1961).

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(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 321, 8 Sep 61.

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8 Sep 61      President Diem stated the views of his government on the projected Harriman-Souvanna talks and the possibility of expanding the concept of SEATO Plan 5 (see item 2 September 1961). Regarding the impending US approach to Souvanna (see item 15-17 September 1961), Diem said that "frankly he had no confidence in either the desire or the power of Souvanna phouma to remain neutral, whatever assurances or clarification he might give." Diem was becoming increasingly convinced, moreover, that "a political settlement of the type being sought at Geneva could only be, or rapidly become, a cloak for the domination of Laos by the Communists." In summary, Ambassador Nolting said, the US approach had "opened a floodgate of doubts, misgivings and real fears on Diem's part."

On the other hand, Diem strongly favored contingency planning for military operations to secure southern and western Laos. He could not, however, spare any troops for the contemplated operations. Small South Vietnamese units might

might be able to operate on Laotian soil near the South Vietnamese border, but substantial forces could not possibly be sent "far away from GVN territory" under existing circumstances.

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(TS) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 320, 5 Sep 61, 343, 9 Sep 61. (S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 344, 9 Sep 61; 361, 14 Sep 61.

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9 Sep 61 Sopsaisanna, Laotian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, informed Ambassador Brown that on the previous day Souvanna had replied to Boun Oum's proposal for a three-Princes meeting in Luang Prabang by suggesting Ban Hin Heup as a "preparatory" meeting place for the three Princes before a "final" meeting at the royal capital.

(On 12 September Boun Oum, in reply to Souvanna's proposal, referred to the Phnom Penh conference (see item 5 August 1961) at which the RLG had agreed to send a "high level" government delegation, equipped with "wide powers," to Ban Namone to discuss the formation of a coalition government. This question had been continually delayed, Boun Oum said, and could not be settled because Souvanna's delegation and that of the NLHX were composed only of "very secondary" figures without any power to make decisions. Boun Oum requested Souvanna to send an "acceptable" delegation so that the question of a government of national union could be seriously studied. A meeting of the three Princes at Luang Prabang could be prepared for after preliminary conversations of their respective delegations at Namone or Hin Heup.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 431, 9 Sep 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 447, 12 Sep 61.

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CHJUSMAG



9 Sep 61

(see item 4 October 1961).

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 148608, 9 Sep 61.

9 Sep 61 CINCPAC commented to the JCS on the FAR force augmentation requested by Phoumi on 19 August (see item). CINCPAC concurred in the elimination of the 16,000 ADO, but he did not believe that the ADO could be considered a source of trained personnel for combat units. Therefore Phoumi was actually requesting a strength increase of 19,000 rather than the 3,000 indicated. While CINCPAC did not doubt the military requirement for a force of the size requested, he believed that the FAR, with its paucity of trained personnel, could not support such an increase at this time. Consequently, CINCPAC recommended that the FAR force structure be augmented as follows:

	CINCPAC Recommendation	Current Authorization	RLG Request
Regular Army	46,921	(38,478)	(55,934)
ADC	15,400	(13,800)	(15,400)
ADO	--	(16,000)	--
Total	62,321	(68,278)	(71,334)

(See item 4 October 1961.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 148603, 9 Sep 61.

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12 Sep 61 In a private conversation, Soviet Geneva co-Chairman Pushkin assured Ambassador Harriman that the USSR wanted a truly neutral Laos and was ready to come to an agreement that would establish and maintain a government headed by Souvanna. The Soviet Union, Pushkin continued, could and would control North Viet Nam and support Souvanna against Pathet Lao political or military aggression.

Turning to the role of the Geneva co-Chairmen, he admitted that the Soviet draft would have to be altered to avoid US complaints that the co-Chairmen could veto actions by the ICC. Pushkin also remarked that the US views on the integration of factional armies, as outlined by Ambassador Harriman, conformed to Soviet policy.

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(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1521, 14 Sep 61.

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12 Sep 61 Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State the highlights of Ambassador Addis' 11 September meeting with Souvanna in Xieng Khouang. After stressing the urgency of an early decision on a coalition government and emphasizing the primary necessity of respect by the new government for the constitution and the monarchy, the British diplomat reviewed the points covered in the tripartite agreement in Paris (see item 7 August 1961).

1. Composition of Government

The British Ambassador told Souvanna that the three Western ministers considered it essential that the Pathet Lao should not be given the portfolios for Foreign Affairs, Defense, or Interior. After a moment's reflection Souvanna replied that this was "possible." In fact, he intended to keep the Defense and Interior posts for his center group.

Referring

Referring to Souvanna's proposed list for the center group, Addis said that the Western ministers had found the list very disappointing. They believed it should be drawn from a wider group of greater competence and administrative experience otherwise there was a danger of its being swamped by the extremes. The ministers hoped, Addis told Souvanna, that he would review the list to include people who had been with him in the past and were now in Vientiane. Souvanna immediately replied that this would be very difficult. He did not agree that the correct criteria was competence and administrative experience. The main role of the provisional government, he declared, would be to prepare for elections. Therefore, it was essential to have men in the government who had the confidence of the people and who could influence them in the "right" direction. This was why he had chosen his present list.

## 2. Elections

Souvanna agreed completely with Addis' presentation on the reasons the three ministers had given for postponement of elections. Souvanna went on to say, however, that new elections were needed as soon as possible because the NLHX were continually gaining ground. Addis expressed the opinion that "we" felt it was very important that the PL forces be demobilized before elections to prevent this faction from being able to influence them and this demobilization would take a long time. Souvanna replied that demobilization could not take long, because as soon as the new government was formed there would be no one to pay or maintain PL forces. Addis observed that although Souvanna and the Western ministers appeared to be in agreement on the "central" issue of postponement of elections until the danger of military pressure had

had been removed, and the non-Communists were organized and tranquility restored, there was a point of difference on the matter of timing.

3. ICC

Souvanna agreed that the present composition of the Commission was acceptable and that it should control the cease-fire and the withdrawal of foreign military personnel and equipment. He added, however, that any investigation by the Commission must always be at the request and with the consent of the government.

4. Army

Ambassador Addis, expressing Western opinion, told Souvanna that the question of the formation of a new Lao army and the disbanding of PL forces was perhaps even more important now than the role of the ICC. How this was to be handled, Addis stated, was "vital" since there was danger that procedures for disbanding might be such as to encourage the division of the kingdom, plus the risk that the new army might be "too much infiltrated" by the Pathet Lao. Addis then repeated twice that the Western ministers considered it essential that the Lao groups must agree on a formula that would, before the new government was formed, provide for the establishment of the new army and the demobilization of the old. In response to Addis' question as to "what sort of new force" Souvanna contemplated, the Laotian leader replied immediately 12 battalions that would provide a police-type security for each of the 12 provinces.

Going on to Point 6 of "Immediate Tasks" contained in the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961), the British Ambassador expressed the concern of the Western ministers that this item might be interpreted to sanction a "state  
within

within a state." Souvanna replied that this was not the intention at all. In some areas there were PL officials operating "in parallel" with his officers, and the meaning of this point was that these PL officials would stay in office, but their allegiance, of course, would be to him.

On the subject of Souvanna's relations with the King, Addis recommended that a reconciliation between the two Laotians might perhaps be the thing that would have the most beneficial influence on a settlement. In response to Addis' suggestion that Prince Souvanna go to Luang Prabang to see the King, the Prince replied that he could not do this until there had been agreement on details of the new government; -otherwise, it would appear that he was "asking a favor" of the King and requesting that the King appoint him as Prime Minister.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 444, 12 Sep 61.

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13 Sep 61 Ambassador Addis informed Ambassador Brown that, during his meeting with Souphanouvong at Xieng Khouang on 11 September, the Pathet Lao leader had agreed with Addis' expressions of disappointment in the delay and lack of results at Ban Namone and, the need for new effort. This was why, said Souphanouvong, he had suggested a meeting of the three Princes at Ban Hin Heup. He emphasized that this was really the last offer he and Souvanna could make.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 452, 13 Sep 61.

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13 Sep 61 The US Ambassador at Vientiane reported to the Secretary of State on the progress of talks among the US, UK, French, Australian, and Canadian military attaches concerning the regroupment of factional forces, the disbandment of excess troops,

troops, and the formation of a unified Lao Army. Since both he and British Ambassador Addis believed that further conversations at Vientiane would accomplish nothing, Ambassador Brown recommended that the talks be continued at a higher level.

The Vientiane discussions, Ambassador Brown revealed, had disclosed differences among the Allies regarding the order of the program, the level of integration, and the phasing of integration.

1. The order of the program. The UK and French attaches who originally had maintained that excess troops should be disbanded before the new army was formed, now believed that "disbandment and formation could move forward simultaneously," provided that a gendarmerie was first established. The US attache, however, adhered to the position that, because of the inherent weakness of the scattered gendarmerie, "the new army should be available to assist in the disbandment process" and should be sufficiently strong to "guard against the risk of military action by uncontrolled and disbanded personnel."

2. The level of integration. The major point of disagreement, according to Ambassador Brown, concerned the level at which integration should take place. The French and British attaches, supported by their Australian counterpart, sought individual integration. They believed that integration by unit would leave the existing forces intact, at least insofar as their political identity was concerned, and thus fail to reduce the "unhealthy competition" among the factions. The US attache, however, maintained that "integration on a proportional basis" would insure that a sufficient number of RLG battalions would be integrated to deal with the smaller number of Pathet Lao battalions.

3. The

3. The phasing of integration. Whereas the British and French believed that all three factions should be "treated equally," the US proposed that first the Kong Le contingent and then the Pathet Lao forces should be integrated into a combined army, the basis for which would be the existing FAR. The Australian attache took a slightly different position from that of either his US, British, or French colleagues. He believed that the Kong Le force should serve as the basis of the new army and that the other forces should be integrated into it.

(On 15 September, the Secretary of State replied by requesting Ambassador Brown to hold further discussions during Ambassador Harriman's visit to Vientiane, "trying again to produce an agreed formula" (see item 20 October 1961). If these talks failed, the Ambassador was to "request Harriman" comment whether such can be worked out in Geneva.")

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 460, 13 Sep 61; State to Vientiane, NIACT 270, 15 Sep 61.

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15 Sep 61

~~TOP SECRET~~ the JCS an evaluation, prepared by Embassy, ~~TOP SECRET~~ in Laos, of the relative strength of Lao political factions.

Within the enemy camp, the report read, the Souvanna-Kong Le faction had lost strength. The Kong Le military forces were almost entirely dependent upon the Pathet Lao. Politically, the neutralists had made little progress in their attempt to create a new political party, despite the "considerable public disenchantment" with the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh in enemy-controlled territory.

Within the RLG on the other hand, the report continued, there had been a "general gathering together of disparate non-Communist

non-Communist political leaders in Laos," because of their growing conviction that Souvanna was not truly neutral and was not a real alternative to Communist domination.

Souvanna, the report concluded, could contain and control the Pathet Lao only if he shifted his "major reliance" from them to the non-Communist elements in Laos. If Ambassador Harriman could not persuade him to do this (see item 15-17 September 1961), and if the US nonetheless accepted him as the "new leader of Laos," the destruction of both anti-Communist and neutral forces in Laos would probably result.

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15, 16  
Sep 61

Two messages from CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC indicated that the FAR, while in many respects making an "earnest and aggressive attempt" to overcome its weakness in leadership, remained reluctant to send individual trainees to foreign schools.

In a message of 15 September, CHMAAG listed the various "corrective actions" being taken in Laos:

1. A class of 110 would graduate from the Lao Military Academy in October.
2. Also in October, an OCS would be established with an initial class of 400.
3. The Directorate of National Security was establishing an officer school for police personnel.
4. The FAR was recalling all reserve officers and "functionaries" for refresher training.
5. Two NCO schools had been established.

All of these schools, CHMAAG stated, were in addition to the on-site leadership schools being conducted by WSMTTs.

On 16



~~TOP SECRET~~

On 16 September, however, CHMAAG reported that, of 405 overseas school spaces allotted the FAR for FY 1962, only 37 had been filled. The FAR was reluctant to release what leaders they had under the present unsettled conditions. The Lao could not even be brought to request the 178 slots for training in Thailand, the Philippines, and South Viet Nam, for which the US had programmed supporting funds.

Regarding the 190 vacant positions in US schools, CHMAAG doubted the value of the many "short courses" programmed for these positions. The Lao trainee underwent 6 months of full-time English language training preparing for a US course; probably no course of less than 15-20 weeks was worth the expenditure of Lao time and US money. CHMAAG planned to review the FY 1962 training program with a view to eliminating some of these short courses.

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 151719, DA IN 151729, 17 Sep 61.

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15-17  
Sep 61

A series of five conversations involving US Ambassadors Harriman and Brown and Prince Souvanna took place in Rangoon between 15 and 17 September. Immediately following the final meeting, Souvanna announced to the press that he would pre-  
side over a new Lao government, that the three Western foreign ministers in their meeting at Paris (see item 7 August 1961) had agreed to a coalition government under his leadership, and that the US had unofficially accepted him as Prime Minister. Ambassador Harriman, however, denied that he had given any such assurances to Souvanna. On the contrary, the Ambassador informed the Secretary of State that he had merely told Souvanna that the President would like to support the Prince, but that before a decision could be made, "it was  
essential

essential that there be a clear understanding between us on all relevant and important points . . . ." The points discussed at Rangoon were: US aid to a government headed by Souvanna, the election of a government to succeed the proposed coalition, the cease-fire, the meetings of the Princes, the formation by Souvanna of a coalition cabinet, the ICC, the integration of factional forces, the prevention of Viet Minh infiltration through Laos, the future Laos-SEATO relationship, and the continuation of the French presence in Laos.

US aid to a neutral Laos. When asked if, as Prime Minister, he would "rely" on the US, Souvanna answered that he would welcome effective US aid. If it appeared, he continued, that he had turned to the Communists, this was because the US had abandoned him.

Laotian elections. Souvanna stressed the importance of electing a truly neutral government to succeed the provisional coalition. Unless Souvanna won this election, his followers would have to fight to save Laos from Communism. So vital was the election that Souvanna was organizing a political party to compete with the NLHX, and Souphanouvong was reportedly thinking of refusing a post in the coalition cabinet so that he could concentrate on winning the election. No elections, however, could be held until the Pathet Lao forces had been demobilized.

The cease-fire. Ambassador Harriman agreed with Souvanna's statement that the Ban Namone talks were a waste of time. Souvanna attributed this lack of progress to Phoumi and his followers. There would, however, be no resumption of hostilities on Souvanna's part if the FAR did not attack. In regard to possible FAR aggression, Souvanna protested the

RLG's

RLG's dropping of supplies behind the lines held by his troops. Ambassador Brown denied that any such incidents had taken place since the reinforcement of Ban Padong (see item 27 May 1961).

The meeting of the Princes. Souvanna, alluding to the failure of the Princes to carry out the terms of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961), again blamed Phoumi, who allegedly desired a purely military solution to the Laotian problem. In commenting upon Souvanna's remarks on this subject and on the cease-fire, Ambassador Harriman noted that the Prince was "clearly suspicious and bitter toward the Vientiane group" and determined "not to go to Luang Prabang until it had been agreed that he should be Prime Minister."

The formation of a coalition cabinet. Souvanna indicated that his cabinet would include 12 ministers and four secretaries of state. Eight of the ministers were to be neutrals, preferably from among his followers. He tentatively planned to retain for his group the key portfolios of Defense (army) and Interior (police), while the Pathet Lao had agreed to accept such lesser posts as Public Works, Justice, Finance, or Foreign Affairs. When asked about Phoumi's role in the government, Souvanna replied that if Phoumi renounced his military rank he could serve as a minister. Ambassadors Harriman and Brown pointed out that neutral groups not affiliated with Souvanna's Xieng Khouang government deserved representation in the cabinet. The Prince, though he agreed to consider the inclusion of one or two Vientiane neutrals, said that the inclusion of representatives from these other neutral groups would be very difficult because of the few cabinet posts available. Ambassador Harriman then stated that the creation of a neutral center group representative of the

the entire kingdom was the most important issue separating the US and Souvanna.

The ICC. Souvanna professed to be in general agreement with the US position concerning the ICC. The major difference of opinion concerned the relationship between the ICC and the Lao Government. Souvanna, jealous of Laotian sovereignty, desired that the ICC seek the agreement of the Government before carrying out investigations, while the US sought a more independent commission. Under the US proposal, the ICC would "cooperate" with the Government, and thus be able to undertake investigations as incidents occurred. There would be no need to obtain agreement from the Lao Government. After listening to the US case for automatic investigations, Souvanna indicated that he was willing to reconsider his views. Other minor differences arose from Souvanna's desire that ICC personnel be concentrated at Vientiane rather than located at numerous control posts and his belief that weapons in excess of the needs of the unified army be stored in Laos rather than transported from the country.

The integration of factional armies. Souvanna sketched his plans for a national army of about 8,000 men. After a census of forces had been taken, he would form the new army by integrating into it individuals from each of the factions. He felt that he could thus lessen Communist influence by dismembering the Pathet Lao battalions. The excess forces, perhaps nine-tenths of the total presently under arms, would have to be demobilized before elections could safely be held. To offset this reduction in the army, he intended to increase the strength of the police threefold to about 10,000 men. In connection with this program, Souvanna said it would be desirable to obtain, prior to the establishment of a coalition

coalition government, agreement by all parties on the formula for proportional integration. He would not, however, insist upon such an agreement at the risk of seriously delaying the formation of the coalition.

Infiltration through Laos. When questioned about the passage of Viet Minh troops through Laos, Souvanna responded that "no one will cross Laos from north to south. We will not allow any country to violate our borders."

Laos-SEATO relations. Souvanna reasoned that since the Geneva Conference recognized the neutrality of Laos, it would be better if the SEATO treaty no longer contained any reference to the kingdom. In the event of an attack, Laos as a member of the UN, could call upon friendly nations for help.

The continued French presence. Souvanna said that at Zurich, in spite of Phoumi's objections, he and Souphanouvong had urged the continuation of the French presence as prescribed in the 1954 accord. Thus, although the status of the Seno base would have to be changed, Souvanna believed that this aspect of the 1954 accord could be preserved with some modifications.

In commenting upon the Rangoon talks, Ambassador Harriman told the Secretary of State that "except for Souvanna's utterly unacceptable position" on the selection for six or seven out of the eight positions scheduled to make up the neutral center of the cabinet from his Xieng Khouang followers, "talks with him on other matters were on the whole more satisfactory than I had expected." Ambassador Harriman also pointed out that he had told Souvanna "on several occasions" that the US could not support him unless he took three or four of his ministers from "moderates outside Xieng Khouang."

CINCPAC

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(S) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 256, 17 Sep 61; 257, 17 Sep 61; 258, 18 Sep 61; 259, 18 Sep 61; 253, 17 Sep 61. (S) Msgs Vientiane to SecState, 478, 18 Sep 61; 479, 18 Sep 61. (C) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 254, 17 Sep 61.

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16 Sep 61      CINCPAC assessed for the JCS the supply situation of the Communist forces in Laos. Since the cease-fire, CHMAAG said, the Communists had improved and consolidated their supply system; they had, for instance, converted Route 7 (from Xieng Khouang to North Viet Nam) into an all-weather road. Additionally, the Communists had maintained an adequate "stock position" and distribution of supplies. The Communists could therefore, CINCPAC concluded, launch an "important offensive" without giving warning in the form of "a noticeable flurry of logistical activity."

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 151578, 17 Sep 61.

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16, 18  
Sep 61      The US delegation at Geneva reported to the Secretary of State that Soviet co-Chairman Pushkin had proposed a list of nine items, which, he believed, should be discussed and resolved by the co-Chairmen. Such a procedural maneuver could save time, since the two negotiators would have consulted with their respective allies and formulated positions prior to discussing the issues. The nine items, all of which Pushkin believed readily amenable to agreement, were:

1. The question of whether there should be one or two declarations of Laotian neutrality. On this point, Pushkin indicated that he was prepared to concede that there should be a Lao declaration followed by a response from the other 13 nations attending the Conference.

2. A general undertaking to withdraw all foreign military personnel from Laos. Pushkin would now agree to include this

this provision in the protocol rather than in the declaration of neutrality.

3. A reply by the Conference to the Laotian declaration of neutrality. This point was covered by item 1.

4. General undertakings not to import armaments into Laos and to limit the acquisition of war materials to the quantity needed by an integrated Lao Army. Pushkin believed that this should appear only in the protocol.

5. General undertakings to prevent the use of Laotian territory or resources for purposes of direct or indirect aggression. Pushkin hoped that the US would agree that no formal Lao pledge on this subject would be necessary until after the formation of a coalition government. In addition, he hoped that the US would further agree that certain unspecified provisions in the declaration of neutrality would prevent foreign countries from using Laos as a base.

6. A proposed statement to be issued upon signing the protocol. Pushkin wished to reserve until later a discussion of references to the 1954 accord. He desired, however, to resolve the question of the relationship between the protocol and the declaration of neutrality.

7. Questions relating to the cessation of hostilities in Laos. Pushkin indicated his intention to present a draft article which he believed would satisfy US views on the repatriation of prisoners and the prohibition of reprisals.

8. Logistical support of the ICC and its control over personnel, equipment, and maintenance facilities. On this item, too, Pushkin thought he could prepare a draft acceptable to the US.

9. The role of the co-Chairmen. Pushkin suggested that MacDonald, UK co-Chairman, prepare a draft dealing with the relationship

relationship of the co-chairmen to both the Conference and the ICC.

On 18 September, Martin, the Consul General in Geneva, informed the Secretary of State that, after some discussion, the Western and allied Asian delegations had decided that co-Chairman MacDonald should agree with Pushkin's proposals for the discussion of items 1, 2, and 3 and accept the drafts which the Soviet co-Chairman had indicated he was preparing in connection with items 7 and 8. The Soviet proposals concerning items 4, 5, and 6 had been rejected by the delegations but MacDonald had decided to discuss them with Pushkin in order to determine whether or not they might be solved easily. Although MacDonald had completed the draft mentioned in item 9, it had been decided that additional time was needed to study the text before determining whether or not to submit it to the co-Chairmen as Pushkin desired.

(By 22 September, agreement had been reached on the first three items, with the Soviets accepting the Western positions. As for item 7, the draft offered by Pushkin prohibited reprisals and provided that prisoners of war be returned to national control and then repatriated to the destinations of their choice. Thus, the US delegation believed, the principle of freedom of choice had been preserved. Some progress had been made on item 9, but scant headway had been made toward resolving the issues contained in items 4, 5, 6, and 8. MacDonald, however, had obtained Pushkin's consent to removing from the hands of the co-Chairmen those items which could not be resolved easily.)

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 630, 16 Sep 61; 637, 18 Sep 61; 657, 23 Sep 61.

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In a



18 Sep 61 In a memorandum to Ambassador Young, Prime Minister Sarit commented, inter alia, upon the Laotian policy agreed upon by the US, UK, and French foreign ministers on 7 August (see item). The Free World could not trust Souvanna, Sarit said; Souvanna had never done, and could not do, anything the Souphanouvong opposed. Moreover, Souvanna, although he had a "good appearance," had no ability and had not been successful as a prime minister. The Western desire for a strong ICC and a small Lao army were sound, Sarit continued. However, the West should recognize that Souvanna's weakness and ineptitude would allow the Pathet Lao to interfere with the ICC and dominate the army.

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 422, 19 Sep 61.

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18 Sep 61 In connection with the JCS consideration of the State-Defense plan for intervention in Laos (see item 29 September 1961) the Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff (J-2), answered a series of questions by the Vice Director of the Joint Staff as follows:

1. What is the current situation of the Viet Cong in South Viet Nam?

The Viet Cong were estimated to have 14,500 troops in South Viet Nam, but reinforcement from North Viet Nam was proceeding rapidly. Until recently, the Viet Cong had operated principally in the extreme southern portions of South Viet Nam. Lately, however, they had instituted a serious build-up and recruiting program in the Central Viet Nam plateau region. Supplies and personnel for this build-up were flowing from North Viet Nam through southern Laos. This build-up could be expected, in time to force the South

Vietnamese

Vietnamese to divert troops from the South where, as a consequence, Viet Cong attacks could be expected to increase.

2. What will happen in Laos when the rainy season ends and the US and/or SEATO have still taken no action to introduce forces?

There would probably be a continuation of the present "official cease-fire," but a considerable increase in military activity by both sides. The Pathet Lao would almost certainly initiate operations to eliminate Meo resistance in the Xieng Khouang area, and Phoumi would probably try to recapture ground lost since the cease-fire. The Pathet Lao would probably not, however, initiate large-scale operations to seize the remainder of Laos. They had probably already achieved their minimum military objectives, and the Communists would not jeopardize their Laotian base for actions in South Viet Nam by risking Western intervention in Laos. Phoumi, on the other hand, might be the initiator of large-scale operations. He might attempt to shore up his currently weak position by deliberately drawing the US into the conflict. But if there was not US or SEATO intervention in Laos, in this or other circumstances, the Director concluded, the outlook was for a continued weakening of the RLG and the ultimate passage of all of Laos into the Communist orbit.

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(TS) J2DM-333-61 to Vice Director, Joint Staff, 18 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2).

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18 Sep 61 The Southeast Asia Study Group, formed by the JCS to provide information requested by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on force requirements in Southeast Asia (see item 1 August 1961) submitted a preliminary report of some 350 pages. The preliminary report comprised nine sections, as follows:

1. Introduction

1. Introduction
2. Historical factors in current perspective
3. Power appraisal of Southeast Asia and friendly external countries.
4. Communist intentions and capabilities
5. Concepts for operations and force requirements
6. Research and development
7. Logistics
8. Communications
9. Options.

In its final section, "Options," the Study Group listed its findings. First, the Deputy Secretary's directive was "limiting in nature." It "apparently" visualized a de facto division of Southeast Asia and did not allow for actions directed at a "long-term solution to the problems of the area." For this reason the Study Group had broadened the scope of the problem posed in the directive, to include a statement of those "military and collaborative actions" that could overcome, rather than merely react to, Communist aggression in the area.

The Study Group had found that the Communists "apparently" had clearly stated objectives for Southeast Asia, and were attaining them. On the other hand, US objectives for Southeast Asia were included within the broad context of policy statements and were not being attained. The US must develop clearly defined objectives for Southeast Asia; this meant the abandonment, with respect to Southeast Asia, of the policy of "containment." If the US did not define its objectives and abandon the policy of containment, "creeping aggression" by the Communists would continue.

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The Study Group also agreed that Communist China did not wish to become involved in a major war in Southeast Asia now or during the time span of the study (1962-1966) - particularly if its objectives could be attained by the lesser actions that had been effective to date. (And the USSR, although it obviously approved the current Communist endeavor in Laos and South Viet Nam, would have its own second thoughts about overt Chinese aggression.) Moreover the Chinese Communists did not have and would not soon have nuclear weapons suitable for strategic and tactical uses.

The Group presented four military options available for the application of varying degrees and forms of US and SEATO power. These options, which were treated more fully as "concepts of operations" in section 5 of the report, were the following:

1. Establishment of a permanent SEATO Field Forces headquarters in mainland Southeast Asia. This option should be adopted immediately, the Study Group said, as an earnest of US intentions.
2. Establishment of a covert activities program in Southeast Asia. It was "high time," the Study Group said, "that the Free World create some active consternation in the Communists' back yard." Friendly military resources in the area should be utilized for this program. The basic objective would be disruption of the enemy's base of operations and lines of communication in Laos; an additional objective would be the sealing of the Laos-North Viet Nam border.
3. Military actions against insurgency operations, in substantially the same manner as envisioned in SEATO Plan 5.
4. Prosecution of nuclear or nonnuclear war in Southeast Asia. The Study Group visualized a four-phase operation capable

capable of holding Southeast Asia against overt attack by the Communist Bloc. The assumption made in developing the concept of operations for this option was that, if the USSR provided nuclear weapons to the Chinese Communists, a general war situation would exist. Therefore, the conditions studied were not, as the Deputy Secretary had requested (see item 1 August 1961), "either side or neither side" initiating nuclear warfare, but rather "the US or neither side" initiating nuclear warfare. The phases were: 1) withdrawal and delay; 2) build-up; 3) cohesive defense, and offensive action, to recapture lost areas; and 4) offensive operations designed to crush North Viet Nam. Among the judgments of the Study Group concerning the use of this option were the following:

a. The Communist Chinese could not support massive troop concentrations in Southeast Asia. Moreover, since they would not (the study assumed) possess nuclear weapons, they, not the US, would have the worry of escalation.

b. It would be unrealistic to think of warfare in Southeast Asia as either nuclear or nonnuclear. Rather, the US should provide a balanced force authorized, from the outset of overt Chinese Communist intervention, to employ nuclear weapons selectively. (In fact, the Study Group had commented in the introduction to their report, Southeast Asia might be one of the few places in the world where a delimited nuclear war could be fought.)

c. The selective use of tactical weapons would quickly and significantly reduce the Communist offensive capability, and could thus bring the war to an earlier conclusion without the serious attrition of US forces that could result from a nonnuclear war.

If Communist

d. If Communist China escalated military operations by air and naval actions, the US should respond immediately with selective nuclear strikes against the source of these threats (In this connection, the State Department should, the Study Group suggested, undertake a study of the political feasibility of employing nuclear weapons in support of SEATO operations in Southeast Asia.)

e. US forces for nonnuclear operations would be of significant magnitude because: (1) friendly native forces would suffer heavy attrition in the first phase of operations and (2) many US support forces would be necessary to build up logistic facilities in the area.

f. Should military operations in the area be required by 1962, the total force required for this option could not be logistically supported.

The Study Group also reached some specific conclusions concerning Laos, such as:

1. Routes into Laos from China and North Viet Nam could readily support the Communist forces there as well as any additional forces covertly introduced from North Viet Nam

2. In overt operations, the Chinese Communists and North Vietnamese could support, by road, 10 divisions up to the Laos border and 8 divisions within Laos, under optimum dry-weather conditions. During the monsoon season, however, resupply activities would be reduced 25 per cent and operations greatly curtailed.

3. If the Communists should decide to intervene overtly in Laos, the 8 divisions would be deployed as follows:

a. Within 4 days, 1 DRV division each into Phong Saly, Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, and either Khammuane or Savannakhet provinces;

b. within

- b. within 8 days, 1 additional DRV division into Xieng Khouang; within 12 days, another;
- c. within 15 days, 1 additional DRV division into Savannakhet;
- d. in 15 to 30 days, 1 lightly armed Chinese Communist division into northern Laos.

4. In the field of logistics, the Study Group examined in detail, for Laos as for the other Southeast Asian countries, the transportation capacity of all ports, railroads, highways, airfields, ferries, inland waterways, etc.

(See item 5, 6, 7, 10 October 1961; and item 15 November 1961.)

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(TS) "Preliminary Report of the Southeast Asia Study Group," 18 Sep 61, JMF 9150/3410 (1 Aug 61) sec 1-A. (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1612, 21 Sep 61.

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19 Sep 61

[REDACTED] analysis, prepared at CINCPAC's request, of the relationship of Meo units to the FAR, and of Vang Pao to Phoumi and other FAR commanders. All Meo units, [REDACTED] had ostensibly been formed in the same administrative fashion as ADC units. Thorough scrutiny of FAR records, however, would reveal that the Meo units were almost entirely supported and paid by non-FAR sources. The unorthodox treatment of the Meo had been adopted to permit two distinct eventual uses of the Meo: 1) as legal units of the FAR, for purposes of diplomatic negotiations at Geneva or dealings with the ICC; and 2) as entirely irregular forces whose activities the RLG could, if necessary, disown.

Vang Pao was a lieutenant colonel in the FAR. His relationship with the chain of command between him and Phoumi was "confused," [REDACTED] but thus far the operational control of the Meo had been left "pretty much" to him

by

by Phoumi. Vang Pao received his policy and tactical guidance from US agencies. (See item 29 September 1961.)

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19 Sep 61 Ambassador Harriman, after briefing King Savang on his meeting in Rangoon with Souvanna, stated that the last time he had talked with the King, His Majesty had indicated that he did not feel he should be Prime Minister. If this were still the case, Harriman said, there would be no alternative candidate who could be agreed upon as Prime Minister except Souvanna. The King evasively replied that if he, as a convinced anti-Communist, were to become Prime Minister this would mean a direct confrontation between Communist and anti-Communist forces. As a constitutional monarch he was obliged to approve any candidate for Prime Minister who had been properly presented to him. Therefore, if the three Princes agreed and proposed, with the approval of the "country", that Souvanna be Prime Minister, the King would accept him. However, King Savang stated that to accept a government under Souvanna would be only a palliative - a "capitulation to Communists."

Ambassador Harriman told the King that the US felt there were only two alternatives - to find a peaceful solution through a coalition government, or to resume hostilities. There would not be enough force available to expel the Communists from northern Laos. The "Communists, ChiComs, and Viet Minh," continued Harriman, would undoubtedly put in hundreds of thousands of men, and in such a situation all that could be salvaged and protected would probably be a divided Laos. In response to this, Savang stated that, if Laos were partitioned, he would abdicate.

Later



Later in the day, Harriman briefed Boun Oum, Phoumi, and Sopsaisana on the Rangoon meeting. After telling the Laotian officials that he had urged Souvanna to negotiate with the RLG in good faith, Harriman expressed the hope that the RLG could also demonstrate by its actions that it was prepared to get down to "brass tacks" to work out a peaceful solution and allay the growing impression that the RLG was "dragging its feet."

During the two-hour talk, Harriman repeatedly emphasized the importance of an early meeting of the three Princes, and Phoumi repeatedly insisted that, first, Souvanna must demonstrate his loyalty to the King by going to Luang Prabang to see him. If Souvanna did so, Phoumi declared, there would be no difficulty on other points, such as the composition of the government. Harriman agreed that Souvanna's loyalty to the King and constitution was very important. However, the US Ambassador stated that he felt it was essential that there be agreement on composition of the government and on the general principles of the integration and disbanding of forces before a decision was made on accepting Souvanna as Prime Minister.

Ambassador Harriman repeated the two alternatives he had expressed to King Savang - a peaceful negotiated solution (the US preferred course) - or a resumption of hostilities. The US was not prepared to support the RLG in any military initiative to move north to recapture lost areas, in view of the danger of bringing Chinese Communist forces into Laos and thus precipitating a large-scale war. The President, declared Harriman, had asked him to make this position "perfectly clear."

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 486, 487, 20 Sep 61.

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Ambassador

22 Sep 61 Ambassador Harriman, in a message to the Secretary of State, advised that his recent conversations with Boun Oum and Phoumi (see item 19 September 1961) had convinced him that "Phoumi obviously has no intention to negotiate and intends to let the fighting start again in which event he thinks he will force us to participate." For this reason, Ambassador Harriman recommended that the US Ambassador at Vientiane "be instructed promptly to express again in the most forceful terms that the US insists Phoumi negotiate in good faith . . . . Otherwise we will be abdicating policy-making to Phoumi."

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(S) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 885, 22 Sep 61.

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22 Sep 61 Following his visit to Laos, Ambassador Harriman stopped in Bangkok to call on Prime Minister Sarit. After explaining the reasons why President Kennedy had sent him on the South-east Asia trip, he briefed the Thai Prime Minister on his conversations with King Savang and Prince Souvanna (see items 15-17 September and 19 September 1961).

The US Ambassador expressed his conviction that Souvanna did not want Laos communized, but at the same time Harriman acknowledged that the Laotian Prince probably could not hold out against the Communists unless Phoumi or other strong elements on the RLG side supported him.

Harriman informed Sarit that King Savang was very discouraged and had expressed opposition to a partition of Laos. Although Savang did not want Souvanna as Prime Minister the King did not want to assume the office himself. His Majesty had mentioned Phoui as perhaps the best choice for the post, but, said Harriman, Savang "knows this is impossible." Prime Minister Sarit thought that Phoui certainly would

would be better than Souvanna but, he said, it seemed to be "acknowledged" that there was "no chance of agreement on him now."

President Kennedy, said Harriman, felt that there should be no breakdown in either peaceful negotiations or the cease-fire. At the same time, however, preparations must be made for the contingency of a possible breach by the Communists.

Referring to a previous conversation with Sarit (see item 5 May 1961) Harriman again brought up the question of a partition of Laos. Sarit, affirming that Thailand did not want to see the kingdom divided, commented that the Pathet Lao had, however, seized so many key places in Laos that the kingdom was, in fact, now partitioned. It was a situation that might have to be accepted, the Prime Minister continued, but he felt it would be a mistake to "legalize" it, for that might "tie our hands" in the future. Both Sarit and Harriman agreed that any initiative to divide Laos, "to say nothing of any resumption of hostilities," must come from the Communists. Sarit confirmed that his government had "no intention" of using force to try to push the Communists out of Laos.

The Thai Prime Minister then raised the question of possible intervention by Red China. The US Ambassador replied that it was quite possible that at this point the Russians didn't want the Chinese to move southward. It was also possible that for the time being Communist China's many internal problems would "divert her from Laos which is after all a not particularly attractive prize." The US Ambassador voiced the opinion that Russia and China would be able to keep the Viet Minh from taking any action. However, such restraints would not be applied to the Pathet Lao, whose actions would be passed off as an "internal Lao matter."

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 444, 22 Sep 61.

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22 Sep 61 In answer to a query from the Department of State, Ambassador Young stated that in his opinion the RTG would be "willing and able" to commit up to 10,000 troops to an expanded SEATO Plan 5. However, Young said, the diversion of these additional Thai troops might necessitate new measures to provide manpower and training for the RTA. Additional US logistical and financial support might also be necessary, as might the presence of US ground forces in Thailand. And, Young added, the actual movement of Thai units into Laos would, as always, be dependent upon the concurrent commitment of US combat troops. Sarit had wondered when this question was first raised (see item 5 September 1961), Young reminded the Department, if the US troops commitment would also be increased. Young requested further guidance on how to answer this "sensitive question." (Young was informed by the State Department on 27 September that the expanded Plan 5 "would involve US forces, including sizeable US air and logistic forces in Thailand, being committed at the initiation of the Plan and fighting in Laos alongside other SEATO forces.")



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(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 386, 21 Sep 61; 423, 27 Sep 61; Bangkok to SecState, 446, 22 Sep 61.

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The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to again tell Phoumi in the "strongest terms" that the US wanted him to negotiate "sincerely" with Souvanna, and that Phoumi should agree to, and participate in, an early meeting with Souvanna Souphanouvong. In addition Brown was authorized to tell Phoumi that it was the "unequivocal USG position decided at highest level not to support him if further hostilities result from his failure to do so."

Three days later, the US Ambassador in acknowledging the Secretary's message asked what was meant by "if further hostilities result from Phoumi's failure to negotiate we will not support him?" Did it mean that if Phoumi's refusal to meet at Ban Hin Heup resulted in a stalemate broken by an enemy attack, the US would not support him, or only if it was broken by an attack from the RLG? What did refusal of US support mean? Did it simply mean refusal to introduce US troops, or did it mean something more? For example, if, by injudicious sweeps near Thakhek, Phoumi should provoke a major attack on Thakhek and Savannakhet, would the US withdraw its MAAG advisers and stop munitions supplies, thereby leaving the enemy in a position to capture these key places on the Mekong? Phoumi would never believe that the US meant this, and Brown was not quite sure that he himself did. Moreover, added the US Ambassador, it was going to be very difficult to ascertain just who was responsible for any major attack.

Ambassador Brown emphasized that it was essential "we clearly think through what we mean by the phrase 'refuse to support,'

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support,' before we use it too much." The US must not, declared Brown, take a position with Phoumi that it was not "fully prepared to maintain."

(On 26 September, Brown reported to Secretary Rusk that he had called on Phoumi. Since the General had given every impression of a sincere desire to reach agreement with Souvanna for a government under the latter's leadership, Ambassador Brown had felt that, rather than talk to Phoumi in terms authorized by the Secretary's 22 September message, it was better to applaud and encourage him.)

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 287, 22 Sep 61; (S) Msgs. Vientiane to SecState, 507, 25 Sep 61; 517, 26 Sep 61.

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23 Sep 61 In a message to CINCPAC, CHMAAG estimated enemy strength in Laos at 20,000 Lao troops (15,000 organized and 5,000 guerilla), 5,400 Viet Minh troops, and an unspecified number of Viet Minh advisers and technicians. (CHMAAG's report differed significantly from an "analysis of all-source intelligence" noted by the Joint Staff Intelligence Brief on 11 September. The figures quoted by the JSIB were: 15,900 Pathet Lao; 12,000 Kong Le; and 3,200 North Vietnamese: a total of 31,100 enemy troops.)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 154191, 23 Sep 61. (S) JSIB, 11 Sep 61.

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26 Sep 61 The Secretary of State, having learned from Vientiane that Souvanna had expressed a willingness to enlarge his projected cabinet and increase its political base, informed Ambassador Brown that the problem of forming a satisfactory cabinet went "far beyond the mere numerical formula."

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In the Secretary's opinion, the "crucial question" was whether or not the US would accept Souvanna as Prime Minister. In this regard, Secretary Rusk warned that lengthy discussion with Souvanna, whom the French and British favored, would strengthen his position in the eyes of these Allies, lessen the likelihood of his making concessions, and thus hamper US freedom of action in supporting a candidate for Prime Minister.

The Secretary of State also posed two questions, the answers to which would enable the Department to make a more thorough analysis of Souvanna's proposal. First, who would control the government? Second, who would hold the key portfolios?

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 502, 22 Sep 61; 506, 23 Sep 61; 512, 25 Sep 61; (S) Msg, State to Vientiane, PRIORITY 296, 26 Sep 61.

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26 Sep 61 The US Ambassador in Paris, in a message to the Secretary of State, summarized a "general review of Laotian developments" given by the Director, Asian Affairs, of the French Foreign Office. Among the salient points of this review were the following:

1. The French Foreign Office would support the distribution of cabinet portfolios in approximately the same proportion agreed upon by the factions in Laos. Although aware of the need to "dilute the Xieng Khouang clique," the Foreign Office believed that "haggling over individual candidates" would accomplish nothing, provoke charges of meddling in Lao affairs, and waste valuable time. If any cabinet members should prove unsatisfactory, Souvanna, "after weathering the first storms," could remove them.

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2. No decisions regarding the reconstitution of the Lao Army had yet been reached by the Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris. France, however, continued to support individual integration, in the belief that integration by unit would tend to create "areas of divergent political color thus producing internal dissension and de facto partition of the country."

3. The French did not want their future military aid program restricted to the Lao Army, since the gendarmerie "would in an internationally guaranteed Laos have the most important role in internal security."

4. The Foreign Office, having been informed that the US intended to exert pressure on Phoumi, requested that he be "pressed to realize" that "rapprochement" between the rightist and center wings was essential and that, because of Pathet Lao infiltration and bickering among the Princes, "time was wasting."

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1662, 26 Sep 61.

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28 Sep 61 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that the recent increases in the size and scope of US advisory and assistance efforts in Laos had increased the need for administrative airlift, particularly for logistical support missions. CHMAAG requested that seven L-28 "helio couriers" (STOL, short-take off and-landing aircraft) be provided the MAAG for its administrative use.

(On 6 November, CHMAAG told CINCPAC that, if the helio couriers were not currently available, L-20 aircraft would be suitable as interim replacements. See item 30 November 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 156655, 28 Sep 61; DA IN 174802, 6 Nov 61.

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29 Sep 61 The Joint Chiefs of Staff of the UK informed the JCS of their "preliminary views" on expansion of the concept of SEATO Plan 5, as proposed for comment by the US (see item 6 September 1961). The views of the UK military leaders were presented as follows:

1. There would be military advantage to increasing the size of a SEATO force in an intervention in Laos: the flanks of task forces deployed under Plan 5 would be secured; and the security of Thailand and therefore of the SEATO forces and their lines of communication would be better guarded.

2. The increased forces would, however, increase the risks of Chinese or DRV intervention and of escalation.

3. The increased SEATO forces might still prove inadequate to the planned tasks; there might be a subsequent requirement for considerable reinforcements.

4. Occupation of the Luang Prabang area did not appear necessary for sealing the Thai border. Moreover, logistical support for such an operation would be difficult.

5. Even with the deployment of the proposed South Vietnamese forces, there was some doubt, in the minds of the UK JCS, that the Pathet Lao could be cleared from southern Laos.

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(TS) Memo, Exec Off to Air Chief Marshal Sir George Mil. to Dir JS, 29 Sep 61, encl to JCS 2344/15, 30 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (29 Sep 61).

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29 Sep 61 The JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their "consideration" of a State-Defense-JCS "Proposed Concept for Military Intervention in Laos."

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The preface to the concept of operations, drafted by the Department of State, stated that the US was continuing to seek an agreement with Souvanna, and at Geneva, that would at best give only limited assurance of a neutral Laos. Meanwhile, the US must plan against the contingency of a major resumption of hostilities by the Communists that would confront the US with the choice of conceding full control of Laos to them or of committing military forces to oppose them.

To reduce the possibility of a military confrontation with the Chinese Communists, the preface continued, the political objective of intervention by US or SEATO military forces in Laos would be limited to the restoration to RLG control of all Laos except Sam Neua, Phong Saly, northern Xieng Khouang and eastern Luang Prabang provinces. This political objective would, however, permit air strikes, clandestine operations, and support of the FAR and Meos in these provinces.

Such a political objective represented the de facto partition of Laos, for the purpose of: 1) preventing Laos from becoming an avenue into South Viet Nam; 2) preventing Communist advance to the border of Thailand; and 3) establishing a stronger military position from which to negotiate. However, to preclude giving moral and legal sanction to a "split Laos" there should be no public reference to tacit recognition by the US of "'a divided Laos,' military demarcations lines, demilitarized zones, regroupment areas, and provisional boundaries or sites."

The preface envisioned two possible circumstances for intervention:

1. "Resumption of obvious and determined Communist offensive actions above the scale of violation of the current  
cease

cease fire." In this circumstance, the RLG would appeal to SEATO; the US would seek to control the timing of this appeal.

2. A large scale Communist buildup that clearly indicated the imminent resumption of hostilities.

In either of these events, the US would request an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council in order to apply pressure upon the USSR to bring about an effective cease-fire. A resolution would be introduced containing: 1) Security Council endorsement of Laotian neutrality and territorial integrity; 2) a call to establish an effective cease-fire; 3) the establishment of small UN teams positioned at strategic points throughout Laos; and 4) a statement that SEATO forces would be withdrawn if the UN agreed upon the appropriate measures for an effective cease-fire. If the USSR vetoed such a resolution, "a move into the [General Assembly] would promptly be made."

v. Simultaneously with this UN action, SEATO would proceed to intervene, as the US had done in the Lebanon crisis. If unanimous SEATO agreement could not be obtained, the intervention would nonetheless be initiated by those members willing to participate.

The JCS "consideration" provided the concept of military actions in support of the political objective established by the Department of State. The JCS conceived of implementing a "SEATO Plan 5 Plus," involving 104,700 combat troops (5,500 US; 11,400 Thai; 4,400 Commonwealth; 1,400 Pakistani; 2,700 South Vietnamese; and 79,300 Laotian forces) and 18,300 reserve and support forces in Thailand (11,000 US and 7,300 non-US). This force represented an augmentation of SEATO Plan 5 by 10,800 men. The above forces might, moreover, be supplemented

supplemented by US Naval Task Forces and by a SEATO "general reserve" of 6,000 troops retained in the parent countries. All US combat forces included in this concept were presently assigned within PACOM and could, depending upon the preparatory measures undertaken, be deployed into Laos in from 12 to 96 hours. The Thai and Vietnamese forces would deploy at the same time as US forces. The Commonwealth and Pakistani forces would be deployed in from 72 hours to 2 weeks, depending upon the amount of advance notice, the condition of SEATO alert, and the availability of transportation; but the initiation of the operation would not need to be delayed pending their arrival. If any of the expected forces should not participate, they would be replaced by US forces.

The initial intervention would secure the key points along the Mekong River, including Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno, Savannakhet, and Pakse. The SEATO forces would not attempt to occupy or retake Xieng Khouang or the Plaine des Jarres. If, after the SEATO forces had thus initially deployed, the UN action did not yield a favorable result, then the military actions would be expanded, as follows:

1. Thai forces would occupy Sayaboury province (west of Luang Prabang) to destroy the PL there and assist the FAR in defending Luang Prabang.
2. South Vietnamese forces - at least one RCT - would operate in Laos along the common border.
3. The FAR and other Laotian forces would conduct conventional and guerrilla operations to defeat the PL through the area defined by the political objective (see above).

4. The

4. The SEATO force would also participate in offensive ground and air operations against the enemy. They would support the FAR and South Vietnamese forces with combat air support within the air space of Laos. In addition they would provide support in logistics, communications, clandestine operations, and psychological warfare.

5. Finally, the US would seek to prevent major DRV intervention by demonstrations, perhaps over DRV territory, of "massive deterrent" US air power positioned in the area. The foregoing concept was sufficiently flexible, the JCS said, to be implemented under various circumstances and on short notice.

The general guidance for reaction to the contingencies that might arise, the JCS continued, would be "a response adequate to fulfill the stated military objective." Enemy military actions would not alter this objective, but could compel appropriate responses that would not necessarily be confined to Laos.

Against the Communist forces already in Laos, the SEATO forces deployed under this concept could accomplish the objectives stated, although the operation might require a "period of years." Despite this, the operation would net an immediate gain by forcing the PL from offensive to defensive operations and by raising the morale and effectiveness of the FAR and the Asian Allies.

If major DRV forces were introduced into Laos, SEATO and other friendly forces would strike at them without waiting for actual engagement, but would seek to confine the conflict to Laos. If DRV forces attacked the friendly forces, the allied forces would respond with air strikes at installations and lines of communication in North Viet Nam.

Without

Without prior warning it was likely that only US, Thai, and South Vietnamese forces could react in time to confront such DRV intervention. However, RLG forces would be able to offer at least "harassing, guerrilla, stay-behind" resistance, and the other allied forces could be expected to be forthcoming. In any event, the SEATO forces, assisted by the FAR, would oppose the enemy as far forward as possible. At the minimum, they would hold Vientiane, Thakhek, Savannakhet, and Pakse. South Vietnamese and Thai forces would move into the Bolovens plateau, and additional Thai forces would assist in the defense of Mekong River crossing points and would reinforce their own northern defenses against the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention.

In addition to intervening in Laos, the DRV could further expand the conflict by attacking South Viet Nam. To counter such an invasion, to which it was estimated the DRV could commit five divisions, the SEATO force would have to be increased to approximately 226,000 men, and the US contribution to 129,000 men, not including naval forces. The SEATO force would have naval and air superiority and should prevail. Its mission would be to defend Laos and South Viet Nam against the DRV and to inflict a quick and decisive defeat upon the DRV. Again the enemy would be engaged as far forward as possible, and his military installations and lines of communication attacked. SEATO forces would, when appropriate, mount a general offensive against the enemy and would, if the military situation dictated, have the capability to conduct amphibious assault operations in North Viet Nam.

If the Chinese Communists intervened in Laos whether with regular or "volunteer" forces, the JCS continued, "political authorization for essential military actions must be anticipated

be anticipated, since prompt counteractions would be required." Questions at issue would be whether to attack selected targets in South China with conventional weapons and whether to initiate use of nuclear weapons against installations in direct support of Chinese operations in Laos.

To face this joint Chinese-DRV invasion, the SEATO force would be expanded to 15 divisions and 8 RCTs - 278,000 men. The US would contribute three divisions deployed in Thailand and South Viet Nam and one Marine Division/Wing Team prepared for amphibious assault operations against North Viet Nam. The mission of the SEATO force would become the defense of Southeast Asia. The general concept of operations would be: 1) to delay the enemy's advance with local forces and restrict his lines of communications with air and naval forces; 2) to reinforce rapidly and establish ground defenses well forward of the vital areas in South Viet Nam and Thailand; and 3) to conduct an unremitting air and ground offensive against the enemy's war-making capacity.

(See items 3 and 5 October 1961.)

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(TS) JSCM-688-61 to SecDef, w/encls, 29 Sep 61, derived from JCS 2344/14, 29 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2).

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29 Sep 61 In a cable to the JCS, CINCPAC argued against the transfer of responsibility for Meo operations [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
CINCPAC presented in some detail the relationship between the Meo and FAR, and between Phoumi and Vang Pao (see item 19 September 1961); the distinction between the "pure bonafide FAR" [REDACTED] and the training, logistical and financial arrangements used in support of the Meo. Among the advantages CINCPAC saw for the present modus operandi were  
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1) the Meo were not subject to the "peculiarities" of FAR logistics; 2) the hazardous logistic support [REDACTED] was conducted by highly experienced personnel; and 3) the "flexibility" [REDACTED] of financing enabled the quick exploitation of opportunities, such as influencing village chiefs and providing immediate pay to new units. For these reasons, CINCPAC believed that the [REDACTED] operations, which had been developed over an extended period of time and under actual operating conditions, were specifically applicable to the existing situation, were highly effective, and should not be disrupted "at this stage of the game" by a premature change of command. Further, CINCPAC said he had intended to continue the present mode of action even when a US or SEATO counter-insurgency plan had been executed.

(On 4 October the JCS told CINCPAC they concurred in his conclusion that there should be no premature change of command. Nonetheless, the Joint Staff was required to develop a contingency plan involving such a change, and CINCPAC should submit the requested plan (see item 15 November 1961). CINCPAC's position that the plan should not be implemented would be considered by the JCS in connection with any recommendation they might make on its execution.) (See item 14 February 1962).

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 156147, 29 Sep 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1757, 4 Oct 61; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61).

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29 Sep 61 The three delegations negotiating in Ban Namone agreed that Princes Boun Oum, Souvanna and Souphanouvong would meet the first week in October at Ban Hin Heup (see item 6-8 October 1961).

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(S-NOFORN), JSIB, vol 12, 2 Oct 61, p. 1.

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30 Sep 61 From Geneva, Ambassador Harriman, in a message to the Secretary of State, suggested two critical objectives which the RLQ should strive to attain during the forthcoming meeting of the Princes (see items 3 October and 6-8 October 1961). These objectives were the satisfactory composition of a coalition government and agreement among the Princes on the reconstitution of the Lao Army. Regarding the former, Ambassador Harriman believed that Ambassador Brown should be authorized "to agree with Phoumi" on the best of the various possible combinations. Regarding the latter, he stated that, as a "minimum understanding," the Princes should agree on the integration of forces, a census of forces, the formation on a proportional basis of a smaller army, and on the demobilization of excess troops and the storage of surplus armaments.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 680, 30 Sep 61.

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CINCPAC

1 Oct 61 CINCPAC conferred at Vientiane with Phoumi and Boun Oum.

During the conference, Phoumi briefed Admiral Felt on the military situation, stating among other things that:

1. The FAR, by the end of the rainy season, would have complete control of the Phou Kha Khouai mountain range north-east of Vientiane.

2. While holding the Mekong, Nam Tha, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Savannakhet in spite of considerable enemy activity, the FAR and Meo units had engaged in operations north of Muong Beng, east and south of Sam Neua, north of the Plaine des Jarres, north and west of Xieng Khouang, and to the south toward Kham Keut.

3. The enemy remained capable of threatening Vientiane and Paksane.

4. The enemy seemed to have reduced his forces in the South and was directing his efforts toward threatening the cities of the Mekong valley and toward infiltrating through southern Laos into South Viet Nam.

5. Past fighting had left RLG forces in a favorable position from which to take the offensive.

6. A continuation of the cease-fire could permit the refitting and retraining of all FAR units.

7. Phoumi's forces were even now capable of seizing Xieng Khouang and threatening Ban Ban.

8. He had devised a contingency plan based on the existence of a firm defense and a striking force capable of either blocking enemy thrusts or taking the offensive. The plan was divided into three phases: a) Phase I, mop-up of the area controlled by the RLG, together with the refitting and retraining of all units; b) Phase II, which had been partially initiated, the reinforcement of FAR units in

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enemy controlled territory, along with the harassment of the enemy, and guerrilla activity; and c) Phase III, the re-occupation of enemy territory.

Following the briefing, Admiral Felt raised the question of the presence of US advisers at the battalion level. Phoumi replied that he had authorized US advisers at the company level and had agreed to a US adviser for every FAR armored vehicle.

Ambassador Brown took this opportunity to warn Phoumi against taking offensive action in defiance of the cease-fire. According to Admiral Felt, Phoumi replied that since the enemy did not respect FAR positions in the Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang areas, he did not feel obliged to respect enemy positions in Attapeu province.

Admiral Felt then told Phoumi that it would be wise to continue negotiations, since the additional time thus gained could be used to improve the effectiveness of the FAR. Phoumi responded by pointing out certain shortages of individual equipment, but General Boyle interjected that at the crux of the problem was the FAR's distribution of equipment to more units than were authorized under the MAP program.

Phoumi later told Admiral Felt that he had no confidence in Souvanna, whom he considered a tool of the Communists.

(On 28 September, Ambassador Harriman had objected to Admiral Felt's visiting Vientiane because of the danger that such a visit would raise doubts as to American sincerity in negotiating toward a settlement and also undermine the effect of previous US efforts to impress Phoumi with the need to negotiate in good faith. The Department of State, however, informed Ambassador Harriman that it did not consider the visit "a provocation in any sense," and that it believed

Admiral

Admiral Felt might use his "considerable influence" to encourage Phoumi to negotiate in good faith. Ambassador Harriman thereupon told the Secretary of State that, since Admiral Felt planned to encourage Phoumi in this way, the visit might be most helpful. \_

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 04254, 10 Oct 61; (S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 667, 28 Sep 61; CONFE 673, 29 Sep 61; (S) Msg, State to Geneva, FECON NIACT 461, 28 Sep 61.

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2 Oct 61 While in Bangkok for the SEATO Military Advisers conference (see item 3-5 October 1961), CINCPAC conferred with Sarit concerning inter alia, a rotational training center in Thailand for US troops (see item 7 August 1961). Sarit thought such a center a "very good idea."

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2186, 2 Oct 61.

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3 Oct 61 The JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a proposed State-Defense-Joint Staff outline program for limited holding actions in Southeast Asia. The plan was based on assumptions established by the Department of State. These assumptions were that: 1) there would be no political solution in Laos; 2) SEATO Plan 5 or a suitable variation would not be carried out; and 3) the Communists would continue to increase the scale of their military support and attacks. The program had as its objectives (also established by the State Department) to:

1. Delay further expansion and advance of Communist controlled areas toward the Thai, Cambodian, and Vietnamese frontiers; maintain current fluidity of military situation to hinder further hardening of Communist area and positions.

2. Maintain a fluid political situation in Laos to buy time for limited holding actions. Do not recognize a political division in Laos.

3. Make

3. Make the Communists understand that the scope of our action is limited.

The program envisioned the immediate implementation of step-by-step increases in the scope and tempo of current actions in Laos, "as determined in the field with no prior warning to the enemy." Operations would be conducted "at least through the dry season (May 1962)" by "existing US agencies in the field"; the US contribution would continue to be "advisory personnel" to Asian forces, and logistics support, including, if necessary, airlift.

The actions suggested in the program were:

1. 

3. Exploration of the possibility of stationing one US combat battalion in South Viet Nam for training purposes.

4. Rotation of battalion-size US elements into Thailand for combined SEATO training or as school troops.

5. Continued rotation of PACAF aircraft to Thailand and continued development of air defense facilities in Thailand and South Viet Nam.

6. A step up in the employment of US aircraft for tactical troop and logistic support.

7. Intensification of actions against Communist aerial resupply efforts.

8. Increase in Meo forces.

9. Use of defoliants and mines against Viet Cong access routes along the Laos-Viet Nam border, and exploration with the Thai of the use of defoliants.

10. Continued emphasis upon counter-insurgency programs in South Viet Nam.

11. Increase

11. Increase as feasible of covert activities in Communist-held areas, including North Viet Nam.

12. Accelerated provision of jet aircraft to the South Vietnamese Air Force.

These programs would, if approved, be worked out in consultation with Sarit, Diem, and Phoumi. To preserve secrecy and speed of action, however, SEATO would have no responsibilities in the program; the SEATO Allies would only be "informed generally" as the program unfolded.

In their memorandum forwarding this program to the Secretary, the JCS stated that they did not endorse it as a desirable course of action. In the situation postulated by the assumption of the program the objectives would be self-defeating. Although the program did not explicitly "recognize" the political division of Laos, it "accepted" it. It assured the Communists that the US intended only to delay their final victory; it conceded the initiative to the enemy; and it gave "our friends no hope." The actions suggested in the program would, the JCS opined, "seriously undermine" the US military effort in the Far East and would place US forces and equipment in unnecessary jeopardy. Although they did not object to the use of the program for briefing the President, the JCS recommended strongly that the President be advised of their views.

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(TS) JCSM-690-61 to SecDef, w/encl, 3 Oct 61, derived from JCS 2344/16, 2 Oct 61, JMF 9150/3100 (1 Oct 61).

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3 Oct 61     The Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the JCS that he had reviewed the concept for intervention in Laos submitted by them on 29 September (see item). The Deputy Secretary raised a "fundamental question" regarding the concept - the feasibility

feasibility and desirability of undertaking an operation that might involve the use of one, two, or more divisions from CONUS reserves at a time of "great uncertainty" over possible developments in the Berlin crisis. The President's decision on the proposed plan might well hinge, the Deputy Secretary said, on "the risks of getting into a serious two-front situation."

The Deputy Secretary also requested clarification on two "lesser questions":

1. What would be the scale of the proposed naval forces to support the operations?

2. What would be the source of the "massive deterrent" US air power that the concept proposed to display to prevent DRV intervention in Laos?

(See item 5 October 1961,)

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(TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 3 Oct 61, att to JCS 2344/17, 3 Oct 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2).

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Oct 61

The US Ambassador in Vientiane, in a message to the Secretary of State, offered suggestions concerning the objectives which Phoumi, as spokesman for the Boun Oum faction, should seek during forthcoming meetings of the Princes. The choice of tactics by which to gain these ends would be left to the RLG negotiators. Ambassador Brown, after discussions with Phoumi, now sought the comments of the Secretary of State on suggested objectives related to the composition of the provisional government, the integration of the armed forces, the halting of Viet Minh infiltration, and the location of the administrative capital.

In the opinion of Ambassador Brown, the objective of the US regarding the composition of a provisional government

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was to insure "a sufficiently strong non-Communist presence" within the cabinet and army to give "reasonable assurance" that Laos would remain truly neutral in spite of Communist pressures. Essential to the fulfillment of this goal was the presence of a strong and balanced center group within the government. Ideally, such strength and balance could be obtained by dividing the 16-man cabinet so that the Pathet Lao-Souvanna group held eight posts, while the remainder were filled by non-Xieng Khouang neutrals and followers of Boun Oum and Phoumi. The Ambassador believed Phoumi should seek this equal division but be prepared to accept nine members of the Pathet Lao-Souvanna group. In exchange for key posts or for the appointment of strong personalities from within the RLG or from among the non-Xieng Khouang neutrals, Phoumi might agree to 11 Pathet Lao-Souvanna cabinet members.

The Ambassador, however, considered the appointment of strong non-Communists to key posts to be more important than the establishment of an apparently equitable numerical ratio among the various political factions. Because of Souvanna's "autocratic tendencies" and the certain presence in the cabinet of a disciplined leftist group, the non-Communists would have to be "vigorous, competent, and courageous," if they were to make their presence felt. For these reasons, Ambassador Brown suggested that Phoumi be urged to hold out for either the post of Minister of Defense, with control over the army, or Minister of Interior, with control over the police.

In making these suggestions regarding the composition of the government, the Ambassador admitted that it would be difficult, though worthwhile, to obtain a key position for Phoumi. Whatever his personal political fate, Phoumi should

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be urged to take into account the strength of personalities and the importance of the various portfolios rather than be allowed to accept a mere mathematical distribution of cabinet posts among the different factions.

Turning to the integration of the armed forces into a single national army, the Ambassador advised that Phoumi insist upon the adoption of an integration program before the coalition government actually took office. The integration would be completed and the excess troops demobilized before an election was held to choose a government to succeed the provisional coalition. The Ambassador also suggested that major staff and command positions be allocated according to the formula by which the army was integrated. Unless this were done, a political settlement might be undermined by the subsequent distribution of military positions in a manner unfavorable to the West. In addition, Ambassador Brown suggested that ranks in the new army be adjusted to compensate for the rate of promotion in the existing FAR, a rate believed to be slower than in the dissident armed forces.

In order to prevent Viet Minh infiltration, the US Ambassador believed that Phoumi should insist upon an explanation of how Souvanna intended to carry out his expressed intention of halting the passage of Viet Minh troops through Laos into South Viet Nam. Phoumi also was to insist that the provisional government declare at the very outset its intention to support the efforts of the ICC to prevent the infiltration of the Lao frontiers by foreign troops.

Finally, the Ambassador warned that Souvanna's desire to move the Laotian administrative capital to Xieng Khouang from Vientiane could adversely affect the political orientation of the nation. Souvanna felt that Vientiane was too close to Western influences in Thailand, but Ambassador Brown considered Xieng Khouang

too

too near the borders of Communist North Viet Nam. Phoumi, it was suggested, should argue for the retention of Vientiane but be willing to propose that the more centrally located royal capital, Luang Prabang, serve also as administrative capital.

On 8 October, the Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown his comments on the suggested objectives outlined above. Regarding the composition of the provisional government, the Secretary of State agreed with the Ambassador's analysis of the various formulae for representation and with his emphasis upon the need for vigorous non-Communist cabinet members. Preferably, Phoumi would remain Minister of Defense, and "someone like Phoui Sananikone" would become Minister of Foreign Affairs. As a "partial fallback," Phoumi might serve as Minister of Interior and Phoui as Minister of Foreign Affairs. None of the key portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Interior was to be given to members of the Communist NLHX or to members of Souvanna's group who were closely associated with that faction.

The Secretary of State, while expressing general agreement with the suggested objectives concerning the integration of forces, observed that more "concrete advice on details" might be forthcoming after Ambassador Brown had completed discussions with the representatives of the Western Allies in Vientiane and made his final recommendations (see item 20 October 1961).

Finally, the Secretary of State concurred in the suggested objectives for negotiations dealing with the prevention of Communist infiltration and the location of the administrative capital.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 543, 3 Oct 61; (S) Msg, State to Vientiane, DEPTTEL 322, 8 Oct 61.

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3-5  
Oct 61

The SEATO Military Advisers (MILADs) met in Bangkok, with CINCPAC acting as US MILAD. The MILADs discussed and reached general agreement on SEATO Plan 4 (providing for defense of Southeast Asia against overt Chinese Communist and DRV attack) and SEATO Plan 6 (providing for defense of the Protocol States against DRV attack). In both cases, the US agreed (as the JCS had authorized CINCPAC to do on 24 August 1961) to serve as "appointed nation." Additionally, the MILADs, with a view toward easing any transitions from Plan 6 to Plan 4, agreed that the command structures for the two Plans should be similar. Thus, the US would provide the SEATO Force Commander for both Plans, and the Field Force Commander for Plan 6. For Plan 4, the larger concept, three regional Field Force commanders would serve under the Force Commander. The Central region, i.e., the principal region in which Plan 6 would be activated, would be commanded by a US officer with a Thai deputy; Pakistan and the Philippines would provide commanders for Western and Eastern regions respectively.

Having reached the above agreements, the MILADs further decided that the SEATO Council should be asked to approve them, and that each nation should declare its force commitments to the plans.

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 519, 9 Oct 61. (TS)  
JCS 2339/15, 22 Aug 61; JMF 9060/3100 (24 Aug 61).

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4 Oct 61 The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the FAR wartime force levels be raised, as recommended by CINCPAC (see item 9 September 1961), to a total strength of 62,321 (see item 19 October 1961).

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(S) JCSM-693-61 to SecDef, 4 Oct 61, derived from JCS 2344/13, 26 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 Sep 61).

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(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 163778, 20 Oct 61.

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5 Oct 61    Reviewing probable Bloc support of the Communist effort against South Viet Nam, Special National Intelligence Estimate 53-2-61 concluded, inter alia, that the Viet Cong probably intended, during the approaching dry season, to intensify its activities in the plateau areas of northern and central South Viet Nam. "To a considerable extent," the SNIE stated, the ability of the Viet Cong to maintain the expanded effort would depend upon improved logistical support from the outside. It was probable, for this reason, that the Bloc intended to build up the eastern sector of southern Laos as a "major supply channel" for this new Viet Cong campaign.

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(S) SNIE 53-2-61, 5 Oct 61, J-2 Sect.

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5 Oct 61 The JCS replied to the questions of the Deputy Secretary of Defense (see item 3 October 1961) regarding the proposed concept for military intervention in Laos (see item 29 September 1961). Addressing the Deputy Secretary's basic question concerning the dangers of simultaneous flare-ups in Berlin and Laos, the JCS stated that over a period of time they had examined various alternatives with regard to Laos and Southeast Asia and had recommended certain military actions short of US intervention that might have retrieved the situation. However, the JCS continued, "the time <sup>is</sup> was now past when action short of intervention by outside forces could reverse the rapidly worsening situation." Execution of SEATO Plan 5, or a suitable variation thereof, was now "the military minimum commensurate with the situation." Without an acceptable political settlement prior to the resumption of overt hostilities, there was "no feasible military alternative of lesser magnitude which will prevent the loss of Laos, South Vietnam and ultimately Southeast Asia." If the execution of SEATO Plan 5 caused escalation, additional mobilization would be required. Nonetheless, as the JCS had previously stated (see item 7 September 1961), the US could not afford to become "preoccupied with Berlin to the extent that we close our eyes to the [critical] situation in Southeast Asia." In fact, the JCS had agreed in connection with Berlin planning that the execution of SEATO Plan 5 would be an effective counter to any Soviet denial of access to Berlin. It was not a question, the JCS concluded, of the desirability of prosecuting two limited wars at the same time. Rather, they said, "the

"the fact of the matter is that we may be faced with such a contingency."

The JCS also replied to the Deputy Secretary's two "lesser questions" (see item 3 October 1961), as follows:

1. The naval forces in support of SEATO Plan 5 operations would consist of one or two attack carrier strike groups with supporting forces, the employment of which would not unacceptably reduce Seventh Fleet capabilities in the remainder of WESTPAC. In the event of Chinese Communist intervention and the resulting additional naval deployments, elements of the First Fleet would deploy from EASTPAC to replace the WESTPAC striking power diverted to Southeast Asia.

2. The "massive deterrent" US air power that would put on a "show of force" over North Viet Nam could be "displayed" by the air forces assigned to SEATO Plan 5, by other PACOM aircraft, or by SAC training flights. Such an exercise would not "dilute" other deployments and would moreover serve the secondary purpose of providing useful reconnaissance.

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(TS) JCSM-704-61 to SecDef, 5 Oct 61, derived from JCS 2344/18, 4 Oct 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2).

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10 Oct 61

The Service Chiefs submitted to the JCS their respective comments on the preliminary report of the Southeast Asia Study Group (see item 18 September 1961). The CSA and the CMC both considered the assumption of the report, that the Chinese Communists would not be provided nuclear weapons by the USSR, to be "unrealistic." The CNO considered the report's statement that escalation would be the worry of the Chinese "not entirely valid." CSAF stated his similar worry differently: "the proposed force requirements would," he said, "be invalidated in the event of participation, even of a

covert

covert nature, by the USSR."

CSA had several more basic objections to register. The Study Group proposal that the US employ nuclear weapons from the outset of any war in Southeast Asia appeared, CSA said, to be based on the assumption, inter alia, that the Chinese would not have a retaliatory capability - this, as stated above, he considered an unrealistic assumption.

The logistics section of the study was "misleading," CSA continued. It failed to take into consideration the logistic capabilities of the Army forces that would support the four-phased military operations. Also, the conclusion that the use of nuclear weapons would be accepted by the Southeast Asia Allies was unproven, and the possible calamitous effect of such employment on world opinion was ignored.

The CSA then reminded the JCS that their approved revision of Basic National Security Policy had emphasized a change in policy for the employment of nuclear weapons in limited war, as follows:

- a. Make every feasible effort to keep the war at a non-nuclear level but be prepared to use nuclear weapons when required; and
- b. meet non-nuclear attacks with a nuclear response when vital interests cannot be defended at the non-nuclear level.

The implication of the study was that a Chinese nonnuclear attack on SEATO forces and bases would be considered as escalation and US use of nuclear weapons would be considered mandatory. This need not necessarily be true, CSA said, and again he cited chapter and verse of the JCS-approved Basic National Security Policy:

1. A limited war should be conducted in a manner which "controls the scope and intensity of the conflict to minimize the risk of escalation to general war."

2. Should

2. Should limited war occur, the US would "prevent undesired escalation of the war and prevent the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons."

With US escalation mandatory and directed at a decisive defeat of Communist China, the result would be general war - a situation CSA believed " could be avoided by actions less drastic than those visualized by the study group."

There was, CSA said finally, no justification for concluding that a nonnuclear war in Southeast Asia would be unsuccessful for the US and its Allies. In accordance with national policy and military planning, therefore, the US should not predetermine a reliance on nuclear weapons. Rather, the US should use nuclear weapons only if the enemy initiated their use or if their use was necessary to defend the vital interests of the US.

(See items 12 October 1961 and 15 November 1961.)

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(TS) JCS 2339/25, JCS 2339/26, JCS 2339/27, all 10 Oct 61, and JCS 2339/28, 11 Oct 61; all in JMF 9150/3410 (1 Aug 61).

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6 Oct 61      Concerned by reports of increased Viet Cong infiltration through southern Laos into South Viet Nam, CINCPAC, in a message to PACAF, noted that the RT-33 and RB-26 aircraft were incapable of providing photographic coverage of Laos in the "space and time frame required," and expressed his belief that an RF-101 unit with its supporting photo processing center should be moved to Viet Nam or perhaps to Thailand in order to provide the necessary coverage. CINCPAC then requested the opinions of CHJUSMAG Thailand and CHMAAG Laos on the possible use of RF-101s.

(On 15 October, CHMAAG Laos stated his own and Ambassador Brown's endorsement of the proposed employment of

RF-101s



RF-101s over Laos. In addition, he recommended that consideration be given to establishing an air courier service to fly prints from the airfield at Don Muang, Thailand, to Bangkok. CHJUSMAG Thailand reported on 17 October that the US Ambassador at Bangkok approved basing the RF-101s at Don Muang but believed that, pending further discussions with the RTG, the reconnaissance coverage should be confined to Laos. (See item 17 October 1961.))

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Viet Nam to CINCPAC, 100909Z Sep 61; (S) Msg CINCPAC to PACAF, DA IN 158822, 6 Oct 61; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 163053, 15 Oct 61; (S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 162368, 17 Oct 61.

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6 Oct 61 The JCS, responding to a 3 July 1961 request by the Secretary of Defense (see item), forwarded to the Secretary detailed data on logistic, airfield, and lines of communication improvements required for Southeast Asia. The requirements listed had an estimated cost of \$626.81 million and included the following projects for Laos:

1. Improvement of Wattay airfield (Vientiane).
2. Construction of two roads from Attopeu, Laos: one to Ban Het, Viet Nam, and one to Ubon, Thailand.
3. Prepositioning of 8 mechanized landing craft (LCM) at four Mekong River crossing points between Laos and Thailand.
4. Increased air terminal facilities at Seno.
5. Negotiation for entry and base rights in Laos, as required.
6. Provision for "support of combat attrition . . . in the event of resumption of hostilities."
7. Various communications improvements.

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(On 22 October, CINCPAC, who had been asked to designate his priority needs from among the total requirements, classed the improvement to Wattay airfield as "urgently required.")

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(TS) JCSM-694-61 to SecDef, w/att, 6 Oct 61, derived from JCS 2118/161, 22 Sep 61; JMF 9150/4000 (3 Jul 61).  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 222318Z Oct 61.

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6 Oct 61     The views of the Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee on the US suggestion for an expanded SEATO Plan 5 (see item 6 September 1961) were forwarded to the JCS. The Australians stated that they had already recognized that SEATO Plan 5 would be unlikely to achieve its objectives in the existing situation. The expanded plan proposed by the US was militarily more realistic. It was the opinion of the Australian Chiefs that SEATO forces of the order provided by the current Plan 5, together with the FAR and the additional Thai and South Vietnamese contingents envisaged by the US concept, could secure southern Laos up to the 17th parallel against Pathet Lao opposition at the current levels; the SEATO forces deployed north of the parallel would be able to hold their positions against the PL.

Even this larger SEATO force could not, however, withstand what the Australians termed "the assessed threat of four Communist [presumably Chinese or DRV] divisions in Laos." Intervention in Laos should not therefore be undertaken, the Australians concluded, unless the participating nations were "willing and able to meet also the heavier burdens that would be involved in substantial commitments over and above the forces now proposed to be deployed."

(On 13 October, the JCS decided that they were in general agreement with the Australian views. They authorized the Director, Joint Staff, to so inform the

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Australian Chiefs.)

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(TS) Memos, Head, Australian JSS to Dir, JS, 6 Oct 61, att to JCS 2344/20, 12 Oct 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 May 61) (2)

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6-8  
Oct 61

Princes Souvanna, Boun Oum, and Souphanouvong conferred on 6 October at Ban Hin Heup concerning the establishment of a coalition government.

At the conclusion of the day's talks, the Princes issued a communique which stated that they had formed a joint committee to summarize the differences of opinion among the factions in order that these conflicts could be resolved by the Princes themselves. The newly-created committee immediately began discussing the selection of a Prime Minister, the size of the cabinet, and the distribution of portfolios.

On 8 October, the three Princes sought to resolve some of the differences that had come to light during the committee sessions. The Princes approved the creation of a 16-man cabinet, agreed that the Prime Minister and Vice President of Council would hold portfolios, and decided to present Souvanna to the King for designation as head of the coalition government (see item 18 October 1961). In addition, they directed the committee to continue its discussions and made Souvanna responsible for choosing the time and site of the next meeting of the Princes.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 554, 6 Oct 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 563, 8 Oct 61; (OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 555, 6 Oct 61; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState 562, 8 Oct 61; 566, 9 Oct 61.

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8 Oct 61 In the course of his response to Ambassador Brown's list of suggested objectives which the RLG should seek at the meeting of the Princes at Ban Hin Heup (see item 3 October 1961), Secretary of State Rusk commented upon the Laos Country

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Teams's views of the Ryan Plan (see item 31 August 1961).

The Secretary of State, although aware of the need for "maximizing" Western influence in Souvanna's expanded police force, did not believe that the Ryan Plan should be put into effect at this time. In addition to those arguments previously conveyed to the Secretary of State by Ambassador Brown, the major reasons for delaying implementation were that: 1) the French, who were likely to have the primary training mission within the Lao Ministry of Defense, would desire and would receive the task of training the gendarmerie as well; and 2) Souvanna appeared unwilling or unable to accept the Ryan Plan.

The subject of the Lao national police, the Secretary of State added, would be considered further after talks with the French (see item 30 October 1961).

(On 15 October, Ambassador Brown, who continued to believe that the Ryan Plan should be put into effect at this time, informed the Secretary of State that, if the plan were not adopted in its entirety, the Ambassador hoped that the French could be persuaded to modify their proposed gendarmerie program to include a provincial police force and to assign the US a role in training and advising as well as in financing the police organization. (For the French plan, see item 21 October 1961.))

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(S) Msg, State to Vientiane, 322, 8 Oct 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 592, 15 Oct 61.

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11 Oct 61 The President directed several courses of action with regard to Viet Nam, among which were:

1. The initiation of guerrilla actions, including the use of US advisers if necessary, against Viet Cong aerial resupply missions in the Tchepone area in Laos.

2. A mission by General Taylor to South Viet Nam to explore ways in which US assistance could be more effective (see item 3 November 1961).

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(TS) NSAM 104, 13 Oct 61, att to JCS 2339/30, 18 Oct 61.

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11 Oct 61 The JCS informed the Secretary of Defense that, subject to his approval, they had authorized CINCPAC (the implementing message to CINCPAC was actually dispatched on 12 October 1961) to "program for" the increase in WSMTT personnel in Laos (from 330 to 500 personnel) directed by the President on 29 August (see item).

(On 25 October, the Director of Military Assistance, OASD(ISA), informed the JCS that OSD programming and funding actions for support of the increased WSMTTs had been initiated.)

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(TS) JCSM-722-61 to SecDef, 11 Oct 61; (S) Msg, JCS to CSA and CINCPAC, JCS 1850, 12 Oct 61; both derived from JCS 2344/19, 6 Oct 61. (S) Memo, Dir Mil Asst, OASD (ISA) to CJCS, 25 Oct 61, att to JCS 2344/22, 27 Oct 61. All in JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61).

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12 Oct 61 The Deputy Secretary of Defense commented to the JCS upon the preliminary report of the Southeast Asia Study Group (see item 18 September 1961). The report provided considerable information on the problem of combating Communist activities in Southeast Asia, the Deputy Secretary said; especially useful was the material assembled on logistics. Final judgment and approval of the concepts and options set forth in the study were reserved, however, pending the submission of a final report. The Deputy Secretary suggested that, in the next phase of the study, emphasis be given to the following subjects:

1. The analysis of the pattern of military operations that might develop following the intervention of US and other external forces in the area . . . .

2. The possibility of combating some types of Chinese Communist/DRV aggression in the area with a relatively small number of US ground forces aided by sizeable US air and naval forces. This investigation should identify the threshold at which large scale US intervention on the ground would be necessary.

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3. The implications for our position in Southeast Asia if limited, selective use of nuclear weapons by the US is met by comparable use of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union.

4. The development of alternative logistics proposals for the area to include not only infrastructure but also prestocking of materiel and other related measures.

(See item 15 November 1961.)

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(TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 12 Oct 61, att to JCS 2339/29, 13 Oct 61.

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13 Oct 61 The Vice Director, Joint Staff, furnished to CJCS a report by Brigadier General William H. Craig, senior member of a Joint Survey Team that had visited Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam during August 1961. The missions of the Survey Team had been, General Craig reported, the following:

1. To determine the situation in Laos.
2. To develop a library of information to augment that available in Washington.
3. To explore the possible resumption of full-scale hostilities in Laos.
4. To visit specified areas where US supported operations are or may be carried out.
5. To note UW capabilities, to include Meo operations.

The "observations" of the team were as follows:

1. Leadership: Despite extensive US training efforts, FAR combat capabilities "vis-a-vis the Viet Minh" had not appreciably increased, inasmuch as the rebels had also been preparing for resumption of hostilities.

Lack of leadership was the major FAR deficiency. At the top there was Phoumi--"a real driving force, the only one . . . observed in Laos," but "a poor organizer who does not know how to delegate." Phoumi's criterion for

selection

selection of key subordinates was loyalty, not ability, and in consequence incompetent senior officers were retained in major command positions (most notably one Kam Khong, whose reward for losing five battles had been promotion to general and a prize new command assignment). Moreover, Phoumi was unpredictable and often ignored US advice. However, there was no one in sight qualified to succeed him. Other specific deficiencies in FAR leadership were that: 1) junior officers were poorly schooled and received no guidance from their superiors; 2) the officer corps was "badly shaken" by what it considered the failure of the West to support Laos against "an overwhelming intervention" from North Viet Nam; and 3) there were serious shortages of officers and NCOs generally. Even US fighting men could not be expected to win, the team said, with such poor leadership and support as the Lao enlisted man received.

2. Logistics. The FAR logistics system was "totally ineffective," principally, again, because of the serious lack of qualified leaders. A "US directed" logistics system down to battalion level was urgently required; the necessary equipment was in the FAR depots, but it did not reach the troops.

3. Training. The US training program was beginning to pay dividends, but it was a "long-term investment." Training problems included: 1) the unwillingness of the FAR to fill school quotas, because of the shortage of officers and NCOs at the front; 2) illiteracy; 3) lack of facilities; and 4) the change-over from French to US systems. It might take three to five years to develop effective Lao armed forces.

4. Current

4. Current Operations. The period since the cease-fire had not been one of stalemate and inactivity. The FAR had been training, regrouping, reorganizing, and engaging in small-unit combat activity against PL/VM limited offensives and other cease-fire violations. Moreover, Phoumi had been in consultation with Thai and South Vietnamese military officials.

Neither had the PL/VM been idle since the cease-fire. They were consolidating their control of Phong Saly, Sam Neua, and Xieng Khouang provinces, attempting to suppress the Meo, infiltrating southern Laos, recruiting, resupplying, and conducting patrols, probes, and hit-and-run raids. On balance, and owing primarily to the extensive Viet Minh encadrement of the PL and to Communist logistical support, the enemy had retained superiority over the FAR and could initiate offensive operations on all major fronts at times and places of its own choosing. It was, however, the consensus of the Survey Team and of most US advisers in Laos that the Lao soldier would fight; with necessary leadership, training, and time, he could be used to form units effective by US standards.

5. Possible Future Operations. The Survey Team agreed that there was a strong possibility that large-scale combat would be resumed at the end of the rainy season, with special effort devoted by the Communists to securing and expanding the route through Laos into South Viet Nam. (Both Phoumi and Diem believed that the Communists now planned to split Laos on a North-South, rather than an East-West line. The Communists would in this way, the Survey Team pointed out, be able to place Viet Cong troops in force along the Lao-South Viet Nam border.)

If hostilities



If hostilities were resumed, the FAR could conduct limited defensive and rear area security operations. In the face of enemy "attack-in-force," the FAR could conduct only delaying actions for two or three weeks. If, however, Phoumi were supported at once by multinational forces as in SEATO Plan 5, he should be able to hold present positions, implement extensive guerrilla operations in northeast Laos, clear his rear areas, and continue to improve the combat effectiveness of the FAR.

Phoumi appeared to the Survey Team to be "quietly desperate, but cagy and determined." He would accept any help in the form of US advisers, [REDACTED] What he really wanted, the Survey Team thought, was a US commitment to resist actively Communist intervention in Laos; and what the US "really needed" in Laos was a "'MAAG-Embassy'" team such as Van Fleet and Puerifoy had formed in Greece.

The Survey Team then presented its conclusions and recommendations, as follows:

A. With the end of the rainy season in sight, the situation in Laos is now critical.

B. The future of the US in Southeast Asia is at stake.

C. It may be too late unless we act now one way or another.

D. An immediate decision is urgently required, therefore, as to future US policy in Southeast Asia.

E. If it is in the best interest of the United States to continue to defend Southeast Asia against communism we must take urgent action now.

F. It would be impossible to hold against the communists in Laos with only the FAR forces currently available.

G. Therefore, the following should be done if we are to remain in Southeast Asia:

1. Take the initial steps, right now, to implement SEATO Plan 5, or a suitable

variation

variation thereof, to permit the multinational forces concerned to be in the desired positions before the end of the rainy season.

2. Simultaneously, get tough with Phoumi, with the objective of developing adequate leadership and an effective logistic support system within the FAR.

3. Be prepared to provide General Phoumi with tactical air support in the event that hostilities are resumed.

Finally, the Team reported "a pronounced apprehension expressed by all US military and civilian ranks consulted in Southeast Asia that Washington's preoccupation with Berlin will result in the loss of Southeast Asia to communism."

The remainder of the Survey Team's report consisted of detailed assessments of: 1) environment, operational facilities, logistical support systems, airlift and communication facilities in Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam; and 2) unconventional and psychological warfare operations and assets of all US and friendly forces in or near Southeast Asia.

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(TS) DJSM-1259-61 to CJCS, W/encl, 13 Oct 61; JMF 9150/5420 (10 Aug 61).

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13 Oct 61 The JCS informed CINCPAC that representation had been made to the Department of State on the need for insuring the availability of Seno airfield during SEATO operations (see item 29 August 1961). State had replied that the French were presently refusing the use of the base to the US and RLG in order both to maintain their relationship with Souvanna and not to jeopardize present negotiations. The Secretary of State had already expressed to the French strong disappointment in their position, but had had no success in altering it. The Department of State therefore

felt

felt that any approach to the French at the present time would be "counter-productive" and would merely add to French apprehension about US policy in Laos.

Nonetheless, the JCS told CINCPAC, both State and Defense fully appreciated that the use of Seno would be essential in the implementation of SEATO or unilateral plans for intervention in Laos; CINCPAC was authorized to plan accordingly.

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(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1875, 13 Oct 61.

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14 Oct 61     The JCS informed CINCPAC that developments in Laos might bring on the concurrent implementation of SEATO Plan 5 Plus in Laos and a SEATO plan based on CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Viet Nam) in South Viet Nam. CINCPAC was requested therefore to "refine" OPLAN 32-59 to accommodate "limited or token" SEATO forces in an operation designed to: 1) secure the border of South Viet Nam; and 2) assist the GVN in regaining full control of its own territory by freeing Vietnamese forces for offensive action against the Viet Cong.

(See item 21 October 1961.)

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 1853, 12 Oct 61; JCS 1886, 14 Oct 61.

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17 Oct 61     In response to a request from the JCS for an evaluation of a recently directed photographic reconnaissance effort over Laos, CINCPAC stated that the required coverage could not be obtained in less than approximately 14 weeks. In making this estimate, CINCPAC took into account the range and limited photographic capability of the RT-33, the maintenance of cameras, the probable number of abortive

missions

missions, and the difficulty in locating the areas to be photographed. Adverse weather could further delay completion of the project, and the lack of photo processing equipment at Vientiane would slow the delivery of the photographs to Washington.

CINCPAC also called attention to the vulnerability of the RT-33 and the risk that one might be destroyed in operations close to the border of either Communist China or North Viet Nam.

In contrast, CINCPAC continued, the necessary coverage could be obtained in approximately one week by four RF-101s operating out of Don Muang, Thailand, assuming that a photo processing center also was located there. Besides speeding coverage, the use of RF-101s would reduce the risk of losses during operations.

(CINCPAC, in a further report of the progress of the reconnaissance effort, informed the JCS on 20 October that 90 per cent of the aerial photo coverage of the Laos-Viet Nam border had been completed and was available to the JCS through the CNO.)

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(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 170253Z Oct 61 and 200417Z Oct 61.

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17 Oct 61 The Deputy Director for Operations outlined for the Director Joint Staff, his observations of the situation in Southeast Asia. These observations were based upon visits to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam, and on conversations with US and indigenous officials in these nations. In summarizing his impression of the Laotian situation, the Deputy Director for Operations stated that he was "heartened by what I saw and heard . . . -- they

(RLG)

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(RLG) are not ready to give up yet."

During his visit to Laos, the Deputy Director for Operations had talked with Colonel Vang Pao of the Meo, and with leaders of the FAR. He had asked FAR Generals Ouane and Bounleut what the US could do, in addition to its present efforts, to help them. Neither of the Lao officers asked for the participation of US troops. Instead, they sought weapons and communications equipment for additional auto defense companies that could be employed in northern and central Laos.

These two FAR generals told the Deputy Director for Operations that the Lao had come to realize what they were fighting for, and that villagers driven from their homes by the Pathet Lao sought weapons and a chance to fight. Although aware of the "very limited capabilities" of these refugees, the Deputy Director for Operations believed that "if we are going to turn Laos over to the Communists, as it appears we will end up doing, let us leave an armed camp behind, so our job will be that much easier if and when we go back."

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(TS) Memo, DepDir, J-3, to Dir, JS, "Observations noted during trip through Southeast Asia, 1-11 Oct 61, "17 Oct 61, on file with DepDirOps, J-3.

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18 Oct 61 After calling upon King Savang at Luang Prabang, Souvanna, in a statement to the Laotian press, pointed out that, although his candidacy had been endorsed by all three political factions, he would not assume office as Prime Minister until he had succeeded in "setting up the coalition government in a definitive form." Instead, Boun Oum would remain in power until Souvanna's cabinet had been formed,

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thus preventing a possible "breakdown of the machinery of government." Once the coalition cabinet had been agreed upon Boun Oum would resign, and the King would call upon Souvanna to form a new government.

In a subsequent conversation at Vientiane with US Consul General Creel, Phoumi gave his interpretation of the significance of Souvanna's interview with the King. Phoumi maintained that Souvanna had conceded the legality of the Boun Oum government by agreeing to its remaining in power, had acknowledged the sovereignty of the King, and had recognized the authority of the Laotian constitution.

After the royal interview, Souvanna had discussed with Boun Oum and Phoumi the formation of both a unified Lao delegation to the Geneva Conference and a national coalition government. Regarding the latter, Phoumi maintained that Souvanna had expressed willingness to designate Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister but not as Minister of Defense. It appeared that Souvanna desired the Defense post for himself and the Interior portfolio for Pheng Phongsavang, one of his followers.

Phoumi also reported that Souvanna had wanted to convene a meeting of the Princes at Khang Khay in the near future, possibly on 22 October (see item 21 October 1961). After telling the Consul General of Souvanna's proposal, Phoumi expressed his belief that he and Boun Oum might be in danger from Viet Minh troops in the vicinity of Khang Khay, should the meeting be held there. Phoumi added that he could see no need for another meeting at this time, since it was up to Souvanna to proceed with the formation of a government.

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(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 600, 18 Oct 61; 610, 20 Oct 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 602, 19 Oct 61.

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19 Oct 61 In a letter to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), adopting without change the recommendations of CINCPA (see item 9 September 1961) and the JCS (see item 4 October 1961), urged that AID make a special allocation of \$4.5 million in order to support for the remainder of FY 1962 an increase in the FAR wartime force ceiling to 62,321. If the force structure increase was approved the Department of Defense was prepared, the Acting Assistant Secretary said, to provide the approximately \$5.0 million in additional military assistance that would be necessary.

The FAR by reason of accelerated training programs, the Defense official said, was now better able than formerly to accomodate this augmentation. Although any future political settlement would eliminate the necessity for such an augmentation, the Department of Defense believed that the current situation made it imperative that this increase be approved at this time. (See item 18 November 1961.)

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(TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/13, 23 Oct 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 Sep 61).

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20 Oct 61 Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Secretary of State the text of a plan, agreed upon by the US, UK, and French Ambassadors at Vientiane, for the "regroupment, integration, and demobilization of Lao armed forces." This plan was based on several assumptions, the cardinal one of which was the establishment in Laos of an acceptable coalition government. The text, intended for use by the allied governments during the Geneva negotiations, contained a suggested program of three phases - the planning phase, the preparatory phase, and the execution phase. The program, however, was intended primarily

primarily as a guide for the negotiators and could therefore be modified as necessary.

During the planning phase, national, and regional or local, committees were to be formed. These committees, upon which all three political factions were to be represented, would aid the provisional government in selecting security units and in choosing officers for a reconstituted national army. Meanwhile, each of the factions would declare its military strength. Beginning with this phase, the ICC was to seek out any infringements by foreign powers of Laotian sovereignty or territory.

Phase II would see the positioning of previously selected security units, under control of the provisional government but drawn from the forces of all three factions according to the proportion agreed for the new national army. The ICC would then appoint observers to assist in verifying the strength of the factional armed contingents. Integration and demobilization centers would be established, and the integration of the headquarters staff and of service units into the new army would begin. The various centers, at which weapons were collected from the factional forces and where the reconstituted army underwent its training, were to be manned by personnel selected on a proportional basis from the three existing forces.

During the execution phase, the remaining military units would be demobilized. Troops representing each of the factions would then be integrated on a proportional basis into the Laotian national army. As soon as elements of the reconstituted force were trained, they would relieve the previously posted security units so that the latter might begin the process of demobilization. The demobilization of  
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the factional units was to be under the close supervision of local or regional committees, which would work in cooperation with observers from the ICC.

(CHMAAG Laos, in commenting on 9 November concerning the Ambassadors' plan for the integration of Lao armed forces, stated both his personal opinion of the plan and what he believed were Phoumi's views on the general subject.

General Boyle's personal opinions were that: 1) the basic assumption that a satisfactory neutral government could be formed was "wishful thinking"; 2) since implementation of the plan depended upon the factions involved, drastic changes seemed inevitable; 3) Souvanna's ability to control the Communists while executing the plan seemed doubtful; 4) the unified Lao Army contemplated in the plan would be unable to stop Communist infiltration into Laos or through Laos into South Viet Nam; and 5) experience indicated that the ICC, upon whose effectiveness in policing the plan success depended, would prove inadequate to its tasks.

Phoumi, according to CHMAAG, would demand an integration agreement that would contain safeguards to protect the FAR against Communist duplicity. Such a plan, based as it would be on the premise that Communists could not be trusted, would therefore be "unpalatable to diplomats." Phoumi, moreover, had no confidence in the ICC. General Boyle also predicted that any plan adopted by Phoumi would be supported by his followers in the RLG.

In addition, CHMAAG expressed his doubt that Souvanna would implement an integration plan in a manner to the advantage of the US unless Phoumi were Minister of Defense. He also warned that Souvanna might be overthrown by either Phoumi or the Pathet Lao during the process of integration

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and that, if this should occur, the US would have to be prepared to take advantage of the situation.)

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(S/NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 170993, 9 Nov 61. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 607, 20 Oct 61.

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21 Oct 61 The US Ambassador at Paris forwarded to the Secretary of State a translation of a French paper dealing with the establishment, organization, training, and functioning of a Lao gendarmerie. According to the paper the purpose of the French plan was "to furnish Prince Souvanna Phouma with some trustworthy people."

In essence, the paper called for the creation by the future Lao government "outside the tripartite commissions and the ICC" of a 3,000-man gendarmerie to be trained by a French Mission of Instruction. The establishment of this force would have to begin prior to the time that demobilization of the factional armies got underway. The gendarmerie, however, was to be independent of the reconstituted Lao Army. Since it was considered unwise to recruit from all three factions, priority would be given to members of Kong Le's force. Also, the gendarmes would be well paid to "remove the need, if not the wish, to live off the land."

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(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, A632, 21 Oct 61.

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21 Oct 61 As requested by the JCS (see item 14 October 1961), CINCPAC presented his "refinement" of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Viet Nam), giving it a "SEATO label" and providing for its implementation concurrent with SEATO Plan 5 in Laos. CINCPAC also detailed the additional personnel augmentation, logistical transportation, and communication requirements that the dual actions would generate.

Souvanna

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 210235Z Oct 61.

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21 Oct 61 Souvanna and the Boun Oum government engaged in an exchange of messages concerning another meeting of the three Princes. Souvanna began by reminding Boun Oum of a message, alleged to have been sent on 18 October, which had postponed a meeting of the three Princes originally scheduled for that day until 20 October in order to give Souvanna an opportunity to visit the King. The meeting was to take place on the Plaine des Jarres, presumably at Khang Khay (see item 18 October 1961). After observing that Boun Oum had failed to reply to this invitation, Souvanna called upon the Princes to meet on the Plaine des Jarres on 23 October, or at the latest, on 25 October. The purpose of the meeting was to reach agreement on the rapid formation of a coalition government.

Boun Oum replied that he had not received the message of 18 October and that another meeting of the Princes was unnecessary at this time. According to the RLG, Souvanna had stated, in an earlier talk with Boun Oum, that the proposed meeting was to decide the composition of a unified delegation to the Geneva Conference - a point settled during the same conversation. Instead of summoning the other Princes to the Plaine des Jarres, Souvanna should discuss the composition of the provisional government with Souphanouvong, then visit Vientiane or Luang Prabang to receive Boun Oum's proposals, and finally submit an agreed slate to the King.

In commenting upon this exchange of messages, Consul General Creel observed that "matters thus now seem to rest in a typically Lao state of confusion." The Consul General believed that Phoumi and Boun Oum had reason to fear for their safety should they visit Khang Khay, but he also felt that Boun Oum had no great desire to "negotiate himself out of office."

CHMAAG

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(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 615, 22 Oct 61; 617, 23 Oct 61; 624, 24 Oct 61.

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23 Oct 61 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that the FAR Northern Command, because of increased Pathet Lao activity in the Nam Tha area, had augmented its forces in the vicinity by moving two companies of the 3d Infantry Battalion from Luang Prabang and the battalion's heavy weapons section from Mounng Houng.

The increased Pathet Lao activity which eventually prompted this reinforcement of Nam Tha began between 7 and 14 September when opposition developed to FAR clearing operations in the area, and certain FAR units were forced to withdraw and regroup. Reportedly planned as a 7-company show of force designed to cause the enemy to withdraw behind a new defensive line north of the village, the Nam Tha operation had encountered little opposition between 24 August and 7 September.

Pathet Lao resistance stiffened during September, and by the 28th the FAR forces in the Nam Tha area were reported to have "shifted to defensive activities." This shift was followed by a period of regroupment and consolidation, but after 12 October the FAR units engaged in limited clearing operations, "mostly of a reconnaissance nature." On the 17th, however, three days before the reinforcement of the Nam Tha garrison, four Pathet Lao companies, supported by mortars and recoilless rifles, drove an FAR company from Nam Ki, 15 miles northeast of Nam Tha. Ban Can, ten miles northeast of Nam Tha, was captured by the Pathet Lao on 18 October.

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(S/NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 164673, 23 Oct 61; (S/NOFORN) JCS SitReps, 24 Aug 61-26 Oct 61.

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23 Oct 61 By a joint State-Defense-ICA message, the US Ambassador in Laos, CHMAAG, and Chief, USOM Laos were queried regarding various fiscal inconsistencies revealed in Phoumi's request for FAR force augmentation (see item 19 August 1961), as follows:

1. What funds were released for the pay of ADO units from 1 January to 1 October 1961? If Phoumi was paid for ADO which were not in existence, what steps were being taken to adjust the FY 1962 Defense Support Budget to compensate for this overpayment?

2. Phoumi had indicated at one point in his request that the paid strength of the FAR was 43,763; yet the FY 1962 Defense Support Budget programmed for a paid strength of only 38,478. From what funds was Phoumi paying these additional 5,276 troops?

The Ambassador and CHMAAG should take "strongest measures," the Washington message continued, to emphasize to Phoumi that, if he expected US support for additional forces, he should consult with the US and obtain prior US approval.

(See item 29 November 1961.)

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(S) Msg, OSD to AmEMB Vientiane, et al., DEF 904748, 23 Oct 61.

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24 Oct 61 The US Government approved a Laos Country Team recommendation [REDACTED] to arm an additional 1,000 Meo (bringing the total authorized force level to 12,000; see item 29 August 1961). The additional Meo would be recruited from and stationed among the tribesmen in the mountains between Nape and Ban Done (i.e., southeast of Xieng Khouang near the Laos-Viet Nam border). Their roles would be intelligence collection and the harassment of Viet Minh and Pathet Lao movements along Laotian Route No. 8.

Souvanna

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25 Oct 61 Souvanna sent a telegram to Boun Oum reminding him that according to the Ban Hin Heup communique (see item 6-8 October 1961) Souvanna was responsible for selecting the time and place of the next meeting of the Princes and again inviting him to come to the Plaine des Jarres for tripartite discussion of national problems. Souvanna offered to meet with Phoumi, whose safety he guaranteed, if Boun Oum was unable to attend.

(On 26 October, Boun Oum, in a message to Souvanna, refused to visit the Plaine des Jarres because of his many obligations but suggested instead that Souvanna and Souphanouvong visit Vientiane. Boun Oum offered to guarantee the safety of the other Princes.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 632, 26 Oct 61; 651, 31 Oct 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 639, 27 Oct 61.

26 Oct-  
4 Nov 61 Between 26 October and 4 November, Souvanna and Boun Oum exchanged a series of messages in a fruitless effort to form a unified delegation to the Geneva Conference. On the 26th, Boun Oum called upon Souvanna to submit a list of his proposed delegates and those acceptable to the NLHX. Souvanna replied on the 29th that he had not agreed to the formation of a unified delegation but had merely suggested such an action. Since he believed that the selection of a unified delegation was the responsibility of the yet-to-be-formed provisional government, Souvanna maintained that a meeting of

of the Princes on this subject was imperative. The meeting would be held on the Plaine des Jarres.

On 30 October, Boun Oum, in another call for nominations, denied that a meeting of the Princes was necessary at the time. Souvanna responded on 3 November by reminding Boun Oum of the terms of the Ban Hin Heup agreement (see item 6-8 October 1961) and called a meeting of the Princes for 6 November on the Plaine des Jarres.

Souvanna's 3 November response apparently crossed in transmission a message sent him on 4 November by Boun Oum, who tersely suggested a meeting of the Princes at either Luang Prabang or Hin Heup. Thus, the exchange, which had begun with disagreement on the need for a meeting, ended in disagreement over the meeting place.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 671, 4 Nov 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 641, 28 Oct 61, 646, 30 Oct 61, and 650, 31 Oct 61.

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27 Oct 61 The JCS informed CINCPAC that the stationing of four RF-101 aircraft and a photo processing unit at Don Muang, Thailand, was approved (see item 17 October 1961). Reconnaissance missions, however, were to be restricted to Laos and South Viet Nam. Violations of the Chinese Communist, Cambodian, and North Vietnamese borders would be avoided.

(On 10 November, because of the need of prior approval by the US Ambassador in Vientiane for jet flights over the Plaine des Jarres or over Xieng Khouang province, CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to discuss with Ambassador Brown the requirement for systematic high-altitude coverage of these areas by RF-101 aircraft. The Ambassador also was to be notified that the RT-33s had been withdrawn from reconnaissance duties.

(CINCPAC

(CINCPAC on 11 November informed the JCS that the RF-101s and their supporting photo processing center were now operational at Don Muang and that the RT-33 aircraft were being modified to perform courier service and to deliver photos in support of the RF-101 reconnaissance task force.)

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(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 2025, 272318Z Oct 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 100120Z Nov 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 110011Z Nov 61.

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27 Oct 61 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC his latest estimate of enemy troop strength in Laos. Revising somewhat his estimate of 23 September (see item), CHMAAG now reckoned enemy strength at 31,000 men: 5,400 Viet Minh, 20,600 men in organized PL/Kong Le units, and 3,000 to 5,000 guerrillas.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 166366, 27 Oct 61.

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30 Oct 61 In a message to CINCPAC, CHMAAG Laos reported the growth in strength of the FAR from July to September, 1961, as follows:

	<u>31 July</u>	<u>31 August</u>	<u>31 September</u>
Regular Army	47,011	49,668	53,981
ADC	<u>12,150</u>	<u>12,750</u>	<u>12,950</u>
Total	59,161	62,418	66,931

On the same day, a MAAG representative discussed with Phoumi the FAR overstrength and ensuing budgetary problems. Phoumi blamed the FAR comptroller - who was not, CHMAAG thought, at fault. Phoumi also, however, suggested that the MAAG representative to his comptroller exercise a "more direct advisory role." This action, CHMAAG said, would be a "healthy development" in progress toward "effective comptrollership of FAR expenditures." (See item 10 November 1961.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 301620Z Oct 61; (S) Msg CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 169242, 1 Nov 61.

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30 Oct 61 The Secretary of State, in a message to the US Ambassadors in Vientiane and Paris, stated that the availability of the French paper on the Lao gendarmerie (see item 21 October 1961) would enable the US to seek a prompt, informal, and detailed understanding with the French on the various aspects of an over all police program. Thus, the Ambassador at Paris was to inform the French foreign office of the US views concerning a Lao police force and of the US desire to seek an informal understanding on matters dealing with the gendarmerie and the police. The actual discussions, however, were to be conducted at Vientiane.

The objective of this understanding between the US and France was to assure that the police force would be: 1) created as soon as possible after the formation of the Souvanna government; 2) loyal to Souvanna; 3) able to cope with internal subversion, especially in rural areas; 4) able to serve as an effective counterweight to an integrated Army; and 5) trained by France and the US.

The attainment of these objectives, the Secretary of State believed, would require: 1) a larger force than the 3,000 gendarmes proposed by the French, perhaps as many as the 10,000 suggested by Souvanna; 2) a force capable of exercising the functions outlined in the Ryan Plan (see item 21 August 1961), except for the duties of the provincial or rural police who would be replaced by gendarmes; 3) the grouping of all police under the Minister of Interior, provided that he was acceptable to the West; 4) a gendarmerie recruited from among Souvanna's loyal supporters and a police force

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force reconstituted from the pro-Souvanna and US-trained elements of the RLG police; 5) adequate pay; and 6) an adequate number of capable instructors.

The discussions at Vientiane, the Secretary of State continued, would be based on the assumptions that: 1) the French would have the principal Western training mission in Laos; 2) French primacy would have to be recognized; and 3) Souvanna would be neither willing nor able to accept Phoumi's hand-picked police.

The Secretary of State also said that the most desirable solution was for the US to assume responsibility for the police, while France had the primary training and financial responsibility for the gendarmerie. The US, however, would help train the gendarmerie if France proved unwilling to shoulder the entire burden.

If AID was to help defray the cost of a police force of 10,000 men, said the Secretary, the US must consider the effect of such help on future AID support assistance to Laos. In this regard, he asked for the Laos Country Team's estimate of the cost to the US of supporting 7,000 police while France paid, trained, equipped, and supplied 3,000 gendarmes.

Throughout the Vientiane negotiations, Secretary Rusk continued, the US would attempt to convince France to assume the maximum possible share of the costs. The Department of State was to be kept informed of the financial aspects of the Vientiane discussions, and no financial commitments were to be made without prior approval from Washington.

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(S) Msg, State to Vientiane, 435, 30 Oct 61.

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31 Oct 61 The Department of Defense forwarded to CINCPAC the "informal comments" of the ICA [AID] on actions underway within MAAG Laos to plan for the continued presence of Filipino technicians (ECCOIL) if the MAAG left Laos. The ICA saw many obstacles to the US attempting to plan this continued presence, among which were: 1) if the French were given the exclusive training responsibility for training when the MAAG departed, it would be up to them, in coordination with the Lao Government, to decide whether the Filipinos were retained, and then to negotiate any contract; and 2) if, as envisioned by MAAG Laos, control of the Filipinos reverted to USOM at MAAG's departure, this would be a return to the "PEO cover operation" since any technicians qualified to supervise the Filipinos would necessarily be either military or ex-military personnel (See item 10 November 1961.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 160533, 10 Oct 61; OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 905057, 31 Oct 61.

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1 Nov 61 The ICC sent to each of the three Princes identical messages calling attention to "hostile activities" in the vicinity of Xieng Khouang, and urging the Princes to restrain their local commanders. The ICC also expressed the hope that the Princes would meet in the near future and that, in the meantime, they would use "moderate language" in their exchanges and "base their statements on facts."

(Prince Souphanouvong replied on 3 November to the ICC message. He denied that either Souvanna's troops or soldiers of the Pathet Lao had violated the cease-fire order. The blame, he continued, lay with Boun Oum's forces, whose flagrant violations of the truce had been instigated by "American warmongers.")

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 682, 8 Nov 61; (OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 662, 3 Nov 61.

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3 Nov 61 Under Secretary of State Bowles informed Ambassador Brown that, after intensive discussions with the UK and France, the US Government had decided to have the Ambassador in Vientiane present to Phoumi and Souvanna a plan for the demobilization and integration of the Laotian armed forces (see item 20 October 1961). The Ambassador, however, because of French concern with certain aspects of the plan, was to find, without delaying the presentation of the over-all plan, a "better formula" for insuring that the tripartite national commissions would not lend themselves to Communist domination and that the existence of security battalions would not result in the de facto partition of the kingdom.

In presenting

In presenting the plan to Phoumi and Souvanna, Ambassador Brown was to stress certain principles on which the US, UK, and France were in general agreement. These principles were: 1) the formula for the integration of the armed forces was to be agreed upon by the Laotians; 2) no faction would gain military advantage during the period in which the Army was being reconstituted; 3) the rebuilding of the armed forces would be accomplished as rapidly as possible; and 4) the Army would be reconstituted and excess troops demobilized before elections were held.

The Under Secretary of State, although he did not wish the plan to be revised at present, also informed the Ambassador of some "desirable additions" to be included at an appropriate time. In brief, Ambassador Brown was to attempt to secure Phoumi's and Souvanna's agreement to:

- 1) a practical time limit for each phase of the integration program;
- 2) provision for the storage under ICC supervision of excess armaments;
- 3) acceptance by the various national committees of rule by majority vote; and
- 4) the stationing of security battalions in areas where their particular faction already held predominant influence.

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(S) Msg, State to Vientiane, 422, 3 Nov 61.

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3 Nov 61 General Maxwell D. Taylor reported to the President on his mission to South Viet Nam. Although he and his party "avoided" Laos on the recommendation of Ambassador Brown, his report reflected in several instances the interrelationships of the Laotian and Vietnamese situations. General Taylor stated, for instance, that the future needs of South Viet Nam would depend upon the kind of settlement obtained

in Laos

in Laos and the manner in which North Viet Nam adjusted its conduct to that settlement. Again, the military appendix to General Taylor's report stated that, if the current impasse continued in Laos, thus permitting the Viet Cong the unrestricted use of southern Laos as a route to South Viet Nam, the resultant threat would "rapidly far exceed" anything the Vietnamese armed forces could be expected to handle. In recognition of this, an entire appendix of Taylor's report was devoted to the proposed establishment of a Vietnamese Frontier Force to deny the northwest frontier bordering Laos to Communist infiltration.

[REDACTED] to continue operations in harassment of Viet Cong lines of communication in southern Laos whatever the outcome of negotiations on Laos, and that, if the Meo tribesmen in Laos became threatened by extermination, they be persuaded to resettle on the Laos-Viet Nam border.

Finally, in the political appendix to General Taylor's report Mr. Sterling Cottrell wrote that past US policy in Laos had already had its effect in South Viet Nam. A political settlement in Laos, had been "largely discounted in advance" by the South Vietnamese Government. GVN officials stated frankly that the US had abandoned Laos; they were concerned that the US might also abandon South Viet Nam "when the going gets rough." They were keenly aware of the effects of the infiltration from Laos and were certain that it would not be stopped by a weak "neutral" RLG or by the ICC.

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(TS) Gen. Taylor's Report, 3 Nov 61; JMF 9155.3/9105  
(13 Oct 61) sec 2A.

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CHMAAG

4 Nov 61

CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had ordered an intensification of FAR activities designed to: 1) further consolidate present front-line areas; 2) intensify guerrilla activity in the enemy rear; and 3) attempt to harass and interdict Viet Cong routes into South Viet Nam. The greater part of this FAR effort would take place in southern Laos, CHMAAG learned, where ADC units and CVs (compagnies volontaires) would attempt guerrilla actions near Lak Sao, Nhommarath, Mahaxsay, and Tchepone. If these guerrilla actions proved effective, then three GM would be committed to reducing enemy salients in those areas. In the north, the principal actions envisaged were enlargement of the area of FAR control around Luang Prabang, and raiding in the Muong Sai area.

In the opinion of CHMAAG, Phoumi would closely control the above actions to avoid overt cease-fire violations.

(See item 30 November 1961.)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 169983, 4 Nov 61.

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7 Nov 61

King Savang received Ambassador Brown at Vientiane. According to the Ambassador's report, their discussion touched upon, among other things, US policy toward Laos and the difficulties in establishing a coalition government.

Regarding US policy, the King expressed doubt that the Laotian situation could be resolved satisfactorily, since the Communists would never abandon their efforts to take over the country; the US in the meantime seemed to have abandoned the defense of the kingdom. Ambassador Brown sought to reassure the King by pointing out that US military support to the RLG actually had increased during past months.

months. The US, he continued, had not abandoned Laos but merely had discarded a purely military solution, that could at best lead to a partition, in favor of a more promising solution. The proper course of action was judged to be the establishment in a truly neutral Laos of a satisfactory coalition government with which the US could cooperate in combatting Communism.

Turning to the problems attendant upon the formation of a coalition government, the King stated that there were two rather than three political factions. There were those men who were pro-West and those who favored the Pathet Lao and Communism; in his opinion no completely neutral group existed. He could, moreover, see no real difference in the policies of Souvanna, Phoumi, and Phoui. The King further observed that the "non-Communist group were individuals and did not represent significant political groups." Concerning the deliberations of the three Princes, King Savang agreed with the Ambassador that Boun Oum should journey to the Plaine des Jarres. He did not, however, share the opinion that Phoumi should go there, for a visit by the leader of the Army to the territory of a rival faction could have adverse political effects.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 678, 7 Nov 61.

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7 Nov 61 The Director, Far East Region, OASD(ISA) forwarded to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) a summary of what he considered were the concessions made both by the US and by Communists delegations at the Geneva Conference. Listed as "concessions" were all deviations from the original US/French and Russian drafts, even though not all such changes



changes had been agreed upon by the Conference as a whole. The Director, FER, also catalogued what, in his opinion, were significant issues remaining to be negotiated and characterized the current status of the Conference.

The US, he believed, had thus far made 27 concessions, the most significant of which were: 1) public announcement by SEATO members of their acceptance of and willingness to respect a Lao renunciation of SEATO protection; 2) acceptance of the principle that the ICC could operate only "with the concurrence" of the RLG; 3) acceptance of a somewhat ambiguous article dealing with logistical support for the ICC, an article which designated the RLG as the primary source of such support and made no provision for the maintenance of equipment; 4) deletion of prescribed entry and departure points for military personnel and equipment; 5) deletion of a requirement for ICC operations centers outside Vientiane; 6) elimination of permanent ICC teams; 7) acceptance of a requirement that a majority vote of the ICC or a request from the RLG would be required before investigations could begin; 8) acceptance of the position that a unanimous vote of the ICC was required on all conclusions and recommendations made by that body; this concession in effect gave the Polish ICC delegation a veto over the enforcement of the cease-fire; 9) deletion of the requirement that the ICC be provided a census of military forces and equipment; 10) deletion of the specific requirement for cooperation among the three ICCs in Southeast Asia.

The Communists, in contrast, had made no more than five concessions. They had yielded by accepting: 1) a provision requiring nations belonging to the ICC to have readily available substitute team and commission members; 2) a

provision

provision giving the ICC and its teams free access to all parts of Laos and the authority necessary for the work of investigation, inspection, and verification (this article, however, was circumscribed by others); 3) a provision that ICC logistical support not available from the RLG could be obtained elsewhere; 4) the principle that prisoners of war would be permitted to go, upon release from custody, to destinations of their choice (this principle was abridged by a requirement that freed prisoners first be turned over to their "national authorities"); and 5) a provision (so far accepted only orally) renouncing the use of Laotian territory for operations against neighboring states.

The significant issues remaining to be negotiated were: 1) inclusion of a provision giving the ICC some general responsibility for overseeing neutrality declarations made by Laos and by other nations; 2) length of tenure of the ICC and the procedure for its termination; 3) time at which the articles requiring the withdrawal of US military assistance and personnel would become effective; and 4) continuation of French presence or the establishment of a neutral military training mission.

In commenting upon the current status of the Geneva Conference, the Director, FER, stated that the "net result is nearly complete acceptance of the original Soviet draft and abandonment of nearly all the original US positions." He added, however, that the US delegation considered the agreements secured thus far to be the best that could have been obtained under the circumstances. In the opinion of the delegation, he continued, the US had gained certain advantages as a result of : 1) an article making the Conference co-Chairmen responsible for the observance of the agreement by the

by the two groups, i.e., co-Chairman Pushkin for the entire Soviet Bloc; 2) a specific reference permitting the statement of disagreement within an agreed ICC report; and 3) private assurance from the Indians and the Russians that ICC reports would not be obstructed or delayed.

(For a somewhat different report on the status of the Geneva negotiations concerned with the ICC, see the following item,)

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(UNK) Dir, FER, OASD(ISA), Memo for Dep Assist SecDef (ISA), 7 Nov 61, OASD(ISA), FER/SEA Branch files.

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8 Nov 61 The Director, Far East Region, OASD (ISA), forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) a memorandum outlining the issues which, in his opinion, were still outstanding both at the Geneva Conference and in Laos.

The issues outstanding at the Geneva Conference were listed by the Director as: 1) ICC responsibilities for overseeing the implementation of a neutrality declaration; 2) the tenure of the ICC and the procedures for its termination; 3) the timing of the withdrawal from Laos of US military assistance and personnel; 4) the establishment of either a French or a neutral military mission in Laos; and 5) inclusion of a provision whereby the Conference participants would agree not to use Lao territory as a corridor for interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

The following were named as the outstanding issues in Laos: 1) the method of forming a national army, including the problems of integrating the factional armed forces and demobilizing excess personnel; 2) formation of a police force; 3) the composition of a coalition cabinet; 4) the scheduling of elections after the integration of existing

forces

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forces into a national army; and 5) a detailed cease-fire agreement over which the ICC would have supervision.

The Director, FER, also noted an additional issue facing the US Government --the determination of a method by which the US could support the Lao Army during the period of integration, while at the same time withholding aid from the Pathet Lao.

During November, the OASD (ISA) arranged in order of importance those issues not yet agreed upon at Geneva. A total of 21 items were arranged as follows:

1st Category: 1) Announcement by the ICC that it had the equipment and authority to function effectively throughout the country -- a condition to be fulfilled before the withdrawal of US military aid and advisers. 2) Right of the ICC, without the threat of RLG veto, to establish teams and make investigations throughout the country. 3) Right of the ICC to possess and control adequate transportation and equipment. 4) Majority rule in ICC voting. 5) ICC control over the entry and departure of military personnel and equipment. 6) Authority for the ICC to operate with two-thirds of the membership present. 7) Authority for the ICC to make investigations at the request of one member. 8) A French or neutral "presence" or training mission in Laos.

2nd Category. 9) Responsibility of the ICC not to be limited to execution of a cease-fire agreement. 10) The ICC made responsible to the Geneva Conference rather than to the co-Chairmen of the Conference. 11) Operating centers for the ICC teams to be specified. 12) Provision for a census of factional armed forces and an inventory of their armaments. 13) Provision for regular and frequent

ICC reports

ICC reports, as well as for special reports to Conference members. 14) The ICC to remain in being for at least three years. 15) The armament of the reconstituted Lao Army to be appropriate to its type and functions.

3rd Category. 16) Fixing of the size of the Lao Army. 17) Provision for new documents to supersede certain articles of the 1954 Geneva Accords. 18) Prohibition of reprisals against persons involved in the war in Laos. 19) Provision for the disposition of excess armaments in Laos. 20) Provision for cooperation between the RLG and ICC. 21) Provision for the review of decisions made by the Geneva Conference.

(See item 12 January 1962 for the agreed protocol on the ICC.)

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(S) Dir, FER, OASD(ISA) Memo for Assist SecDef (ISA), 8 Nov 61; (OUO) OASD(ISA), "US Priority on Disagreed Items," Nov 61, OASD(ISA), FER/SEA Branch files.

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8-13  
Nov 61

Prince Souvanna on 8 November called upon Boun Oum to meet with him and Souphanouvong on the Plaine des Jarres on 17 November.

On 9 November, Ambassador Brown met with Phoumi and suggested that Boun Oum agree to the meeting, provided that Souvanna would agree to conduct future negotiations at Luang Prabang. Phoumi, according to the Ambassador, replied that he was having difficulty in winning support for his "supple" policies and that not one of his colleagues in either the cabinet or the National Assembly would agree to Boun Oum's visiting the Plaine des Jarres. Ambassador Brown thereupon planned, and later carried out, a series of conversations with some of the individuals whom Phoumi said were opposing him. The Department of State on 12 November

approved

approved both the Ambassador's stand with Phoumi and his proposed conversations with Phoumi's more influential colleagues.

On 13 November, the RLG cabinet voted to reject Souvanna's offer. That same day, Boun Oum sent to Souvanna a polite message of refusal, which proposed instead that the Princes meet at Vientiane or Luang Prabang.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 692, 9 Nov 61, 706, 13 Nov 61, and 715, 15 Nov 61; State to Vientiane, DEPTTEL 450, 12 Nov 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 688, 9 Nov 61.

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10 Nov 61 British Ambassador Ormsby Gore, acting under instructions, called upon the Secretary of State to express British concern over recent developments in Laos. The UK was concerned by the failure of the three Princes to reach agreement -- a failure which the British attributed to Phoumi's unwillingness to negotiate in good faith. The British wondered if the time had not come to tell Phoumi that if hostilities occurred, he could expect no US or SEATO support.

The Secretary of State replied that the US was exerting pressure on Phoumi and cited examples of stubbornness on the part of Souvanna and Souphanouvong. The US, the Secretary of State continued, could not accept an agreement that it did not believe would result in a neutral Laos. If no satisfactory agreement could be reached, the US might prefer to "leave the party."

Ambassador Ormsby Gore asked several times whether Phoumi might not be seeking to have the negotiations fail so that, after the resumption of hostilities, he could maintain his position with US support. The Secretary of State, however, denied that Phoumi had any such choice and

pointed

pointed out that Phoumi should be aware that the US would not support his every course of action. In conclusion, the Secretary of State remarked that the US actually was doing all the UK desired to push Phoumi forward on the road toward fruitful negotiations.

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(S) Msg, State to London, DEPTTEL 2601, 10 Nov 61.

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10 Nov 61 CINCPCAC advised CHMAAG Laos that the procedures agreed to by Phoumi on 30 October (see item) for future operations of the FAR comptroller were "unsatisfactory." CINCPCAC suggested that CHMAAG inform Phoumi that CINCPCAC could not support the activation of FAR forces in excess of MAP authorization. Phoumi should also be told that his actions were dissipating and undermining CINCPCAC's efforts adequately to equip and advise the FAR. CINCPCAC has supported Phoumi's request for force augmentation "to the maximum extent feasible." CHMAAG should also advise the Laotian that if Phoumi continued to raise unauthorized forces, CINCPCAC would have no alternative but to recommend that actual US support for any US-approved increase in FAR forces be withheld until a "satisfactory mutual agreement" could be reached. (see item 17 November 1961.)

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(S) Msg, CINCPCAC to CHMAAG Laos, 102341Z Nov 61.

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10 Nov 61 CINCPCAC, commenting to the Department of Defense upon ICA's informal comments of 31 October (see item), stated that, desirable as the continued presence of Filipinos might be in a neutral Laos, he could see "no acceptable solution" if MAAG Laos was disestablished. CINCPCAC agreed with ICA that a return to the PEO concept would be unsatisfactory.

If, a:

If, as CINCPAC believed, the contractor (ECCOIL) would not accept any agreement which did not "commit the US" and provide for payment in US dollars, the only manner of support CINCPAC could visualize was the US foregoing all supervision, and paying the contractor in the Philippines from "Presidential determination funds."

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD, 102254Z Nov 61.

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11 Nov 61

In a memorandum for the President concerning South Viet Nam, the Department of State included an analysis of the relationship between US intervention in South Viet Nam and the situation in Laos. The introduction of US combat forces into South Viet Nam prior to a Laotian settlement, the State Department said, would run a considerable risk of stimulating a Communist breach of the cease-fire and a resumption of hostilities in Laos. The US would then be faced with a choice between sending combat troops to Laos or abandoning the country to full Communist control. At present, there was at least a chance that a settlement could be reached in Laos on the basis of a Souvanna Phouma government; this settlement would include, according to the prospective Geneva agreement, a provision that Laos would not be used as a base or transit area by any other power. After a settlement, therefore, the introduction of US forces into Viet Nam could serve to stabilize the situation in Laos, inasmuch as the US would thereby have served notice that the Laotian settlement was as far as the US was willing to see Communist influence in Southeast Asia develop.

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(TS) Memo for Pres, 11 Nov 61, att to JCS 2343/40, 13 Nov 61; JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61).

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11-18  
Nov 61

In the message approving Ambassador Brown's stand with Phoumi (see item 8-13 Nov 61), the Department of State also reviewed its policies concerning the position which the RLG should take during the forthcoming meeting of the Princes (see items 14 December and 27-30 December 1961). Ambassador Brown was reminded that: 1) the number of cabinet posts held by each faction was less important than the caliber of the individuals in key positions, but as many non-Xieng Khouang neutrals as possible should be included; 2) the US could not direct the negotiations concerning the distribution of cabinet posts, but the chief US objective remained to keep adherents of the Pathet Lao out of key positions while retaining Phoumi in the Government so that he could effectively rally the non-Communist forces; and 3) in selecting cabinet officers from the ranks of the non-Xieng Khouang neutrals and from the present RLG, the most competent available men should be chosen. The Department of State message also contained advice on matters which, it was believed, Boun Oum intended to discuss at the meeting of the Princes, along with a warning that renewed fighting, especially in the Xieng Khouang area, "could well be disastrous at this stage."

Finally, the Department of State advised approaching Souvanna through the British Ambassador in order to inform him of the conditions under which the US would support him. These conditions included: 1) Souvanna's entering into meaningful negotiations with Phoumi -- an essential condition; 2) Souvanna's entering into informal talks with Phoumi in order to see what could be accomplished in the absence of Souphanouvaong -- a desirable condition; and 3) the necessity of holding further meetings of the Princes

away

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away from territory dominated by the Communists. The role of the British Ambassador would be discussed further at Washington.

On 16 November, Ambassador Brown commented upon the guidance contained in the message summarized above. Among other things, the Ambassador warned that it was "almost [a] sine qua non in Phoumi's eyes" that he be either Minister of Defense or Minister of Interior in the coalition government. If Souvanna and the Pathet Lao denied both positions to Phoumi, the US should urge Phoumi to take a lesser post rather than break off negotiations. The US, however, could not encourage Phoumi to accept a lesser portfolio unless it was reasonably certain that he could, in collaboration with other non-Communists, prevent the Pathet Lao from dominating the government. Ambassador Brown added that CHMAAG, [REDACTED] ARMA, and the Director of the USIS felt that the US would have to support Phoumi for Minister of Defense or for some other post which he agreed was an equal safeguard "for a conservative beachhead in [the] Souvanna government." Otherwise, these men believed the RLG, FAL, the Laotian bureaucracy, and the loose non-Communist confederation would undergo "rapid disintegration and demoralization."

In response to the Ambassador's comments, the Department of State on 18 November authorized him to advise Phoumi, at the appropriate time, to yield in his demands for the Ministries of Defense and Interior. The reply, after noting the sentiments of the other members of the Country Team in favor of stronger US support of Phoumi, concluded that it was more important to keep the Pathet Lao out of key cabinet posts than to obtain such

a post

a post for Phoumi. The Department of State also provided additional advice on the detailed composition of the cabinet and on dealing with the National Assembly. Finally, Ambassador Brown was told to work hard to convince Souvanna as well as Phoumi that the US would support "a government of genuine unification."

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 718, 16 Nov 61, State to Vientiane, DEPTTEL 450, 12 Nov 61, and State to Vientiane, NIACT 481, 18 Nov 61.

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13-14  
Nov 61

The Secretary of State, because of the possibility that Phoumi was counting upon the support of Thailand in opposing a negotiated settlement in Laos, told the US Ambassador at Bangkok to urge Prime Minister Sarit to use his influence in convincing Phoumi that US policy was "precisely what Ambassador Brown has recently reiterated to him on numerous occasions and which was clearly set forth to him earlier by Ambassador Harriman and Admiral Felt" (see item 1 October 1961). The Ambassador was to impress upon Sarit the fact that the US could not back Phoumi if negotiations were to break down because of Phoumi's refusal to negotiate in good faith.

On 14 November, the US Ambassador to Bangkok reported that, before receiving the message summarized above, he had visited Sarit in an effort, among other things, to enlist his aid in convincing Boun Oum and Phoumi that one of them should confer with Souvanna on the Plaine des Jarres. Sarit, however, stated that he honestly could not do so and that he was about to withdraw the remainder of his delegation to the Geneva Conference. According to the Ambassador, Sarit believed that hostilities soon

would

would begin and that US and Thai troops would become involved. Sarit stated that the best solution would be a stalemate with neither negotiations nor fighting.

On the same day, the Secretary of State, while commending the US Ambassador for presenting the US viewpoint to Sarit, directed him to make another effort to enlist Sarit's assistance in exerting pressure on Phoumi (see item 17-20 November 1961). The Ambassador also was to inform Sarit of the adverse effect that his withdrawal of the remainder of the Thai delegation would have upon the Allied position at the Geneva Conference. Such an action on Sarit's part would lend credence to Communist charges that the US was impeding progress both at Geneva and in Laos.

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(S) Msgs, State to Bangkok, DEPTTEL 692, 13 Nov 61; Bangkok to SecState, 734, 14 Nov 61; State to Bangkok, DEPTTEL 699, 14 Nov 61.

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15 Nov 61 Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to one of its members, the ICC had urged Souvanna to call a meeting of the Princes at Ban Hin Heup rather than on the Plaine des Jarres. Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong were reported to have promised to give serious consideration to the ICC suggestion. According to this same account, Souvanna had promised the commission a prompt answer.

On the same day, the Secretary of State advised Ambassador Brown to await Souvanna's response to the ICC suggestion and to maintain pressure on the RLG by withholding funds for the FAR's November expenses until a site and date for the meeting of the Princes had been

explicitly

explicitly agreed upon.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 716, 15 Nov 61;  
State to Vientiane, DEPTTEL 468, 15 Nov 61.

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15 Nov 61     The Southeast Asia Study Group completed its final report on force requirements in Southeast Asia. The final report was identical to the preliminary report (see item 18 September 1961) except as follows:

1. In introducing the concepts of operation, the final report added the affirmation that a nonnuclear war of significant scope in Southeast Asia could be won by US and allied forces. (This statement had been strongly averred by CSA in his comments on the preliminary report; see item 5, 6, 7, 10 October 1961).

2. The report responded to the suggestions of the Deputy Secretary of Defense (see item 12 October 1961), on facets of the preliminary report that merited further study, by adding an appendix to the logistics section and a supplement to the study. The suggestions of the Deputy Secretary, (underlined below) were explored as indicated:

"a. The analysis of the patterns of military operations that might develop following the intervention by US and other external forces in the area.

. . . .

b. The possibility of combating some types of Chinese Communist/DRV aggression in the area with a relatively small number of US ground forces aided by sizeable US air and naval forces. This study should identify the threshold at which large scale US intervention on the ground would be necessary."

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These suggestions were analyzed in "scenario" form, by the postulating of two situations - one with and one without a Laotian settlement - and modified "war gaming" of them.

"c. The implications for our position in Southeast Asia, if limited, selective use of nuclear weapons by the US is met by comparable use of nuclears by the Soviet Union."

The Study Group concluded that the Communists would have three nuclear options for response to the US' selective use of nuclear weapons in Southeast Asia:

1. To launch ICBM or air attack from the USSR against Allied forces in Southeast Asia. This course of action was "unlikely," the Group said. The Soviets would inaugurate such a course only if they were convinced that the US was "paralyzed by fear of escalation" and therefore effectively deterred from striking the Soviet launch bases.

2. To launch missile or air attack from Communist China against allied forces in Southeast Asia. This course too was "unlikely," as the Soviet and Chinese would have to be convinced of a similar US "paralysis."

3. To introduce battlefield nuclear weapons for employment within Laos and South Viet Nam. The Communists must, to inaugurate this course, conclude that the US would choose to ignore the source of the weapons and choose to fight locally. Moreover, the Communists must be sure that the US could not win decisively in such circumstances. That the Communists would reach such conclusions was "improbable," although "past and current failure of the US to attack the source of sizeable conventional forces in Southeast Asia could lead the Communists to conclude that

the

the same US attitude would prevail if battlefield nuclears are introduced."

The US actions that would be necessary if the Communist opted for one of the above courses of action would be, respectively: (1) to strike Soviet launch bases; (2) to strike Chinese Communist launch bases; or (3) to expand the conflict by selective nuclear attacks on North Viet Nam and, if necessary, China, to force the enemy to desist.

"d. The development of alternative logistics proposals for the area . . . ."

The Study drew up a program substantially similar to that submitted by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on 6 October 1961 (see item). It differed significantly from that earlier program only by relocation of some Army airfields and reduction in the estimated need for rolling stock in Thailand.

(The final report was submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 22 November 1961. By JCS decisions of 2 November and 7 December, no JCS or Service comments, on either the preliminary or final reports, were forwarded to the Secretary of Defense.)

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(TS) Final Report of the Southeast Asia Study Group, and Supplement I, both 15 Nov 61; (U) CM-440-61 to SecDef, 22 Nov 61, att to JCS 2339/40, 27 Nov 61; (TS) Dec on JCS 2339/32, 2 Nov 61; (TS) Dec on JCS 2339/45, 7 Dec 61; all in JMF 9150/3410 (1 Aug 61).

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15 Nov 61 CINCPAC submitted his "thoughts," on procedures to be implemented if the support of Meo operations became a Department of Defense responsibility (see items 28 July, 6 and 29 September 1961).

In the case where hostilities between the RLG and

PL/Kong Le

PL/Kong Le forces had resumed, but US or SEATO counter-insurgency plans had not yet been implemented, the support of the Meo would be controlled by CHMAAG Laos, with [REDACTED] CHMAAG would continue all his other functions and would, in order to fulfill the additional task, activate a Joint Staff Section composed of permanently assigned personnel qualified in all phases of counter-insurgency support. Logistic support of the Meo would remain separate from support for the FAR [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In essence, CHMAAG Laos would assume command control over Meo support operations [REDACTED]

"If a US or SEATO counter-insurgency plan were executed support of the Meo would be undertaken by CINCPAC through a designated US Operational Commander [REDACTED] In operations beyond this scope, such as overt intervention by the DRV or Communist Chinese, CINCPAC would expect the activation of "[REDACTED] force Pacific."

(See item 14 February 1962.)

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 172759, 15 Nov 61 and DA IN 156147, 29 Sep 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61).

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15, 27  
Nov 61

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that he was disturbed by the steady deterioration of the RLG financial position and the Lao Government's apparent inability or unwillingness to undertake effective remedial action. The situation, however, did not seem sufficiently grave to require drastic action, such as blocking foreign exchange accounts.

In reply



In reply to the Ambassador's message, the Secretary of State on 27 November noted that the Department of State had been unable to agree to a DOD request for \$4.5 million for the "revision of the FAR," because such a grant would have constituted approval of Phoumi's unilateral increase of FAR force levels (see items 19 October and 18 November 1961). Concerning the Laotian financial crisis, Ambassador Brown was told to use his own discretion on whether or not to inform Phoumi that the RLG must "live with [the] present \$23 million release rate." The Secretary of State agreed that drastic action was not desirable at present and expressed the belief that the US should accept the risk that the RLG would refuse to make the necessary reforms and continue to live beyond its means.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 714, 15 Nov 61; State to Vientiane, DEPTTEL 509, 27 Nov 61.

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16 Nov 61 In response to Boun Oum's latest refusal to go to the Plaine des Jarres (see item 8-13 November 1961), Souvanna, with the concurrence of Souphanouvong, proposed that a meeting of the Princes be held at Vientiane from 24 to 27 November. The RLG was invited to send representatives to the Plaine des Jarres on 20 November to work out details of the meeting.

(Boun Oum replied on 18 November, expressing pleasure that Souvanna had agreed to come to Vientiane. On 20 November delegations from the RLG and from Souvanna's faction met on the Plaine des Jarres to make arrangements for the meeting.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 744, 22 Nov 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 721, 17 Nov 61.

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CHMAAC

17 Nov 61 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that he and Phoumi had "come to grips" with the question of FAR strength levels (see items 23 and 30 October, 10 and 29 November 1961). CHMAAG had delivered CINCPAC's 10 November warning (see item), and had pointed out the budgetary, equipment, and leadership problems brought on by Phoumi's unauthorized enlargement of the FAR. Phoumi had been, CHMAAG said, "in complete agreement"; he was issuing an order to stop recruiting and he had agreed to work with the MAAG in designating units for deactivation (see item 2 December 1961).

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(S) MSG, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 174323,  
17 Nov 61.

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17-20  
Nov 61

On 17 November, the US Ambassador in Bangkok handed to Foreign Minister Thanat, for forwarding to Prime Minister Sarit, a letter which stated that the US was unwilling to back Phoumi if hostilities were to result from his failure to negotiate, and which urged the Thai Government to help make sure that Phoumi understood this policy. The letter also expressed Secretary Rusk's hope that the Thai delegation would remain in Geneva. (See item 13-14 November 1961.)

Foreign Minister Thanat on the following day informed the US Ambassador that Thailand had no intention of withdrawing from the Geneva Conference. When the conversation turned to the question of Phoumi's willingness to negotiate, Thanat, the Ambassador reported, seemed to doubt the wisdom of pressuring Phoumi into negotiating with Souvanna.

In another interview on 20 November, Thanat expressed annoyance with the US for pressing the Thai Government to use its influence with Phoumi. Thanat also stated that the

RTG

RTG was annoyed by the inconsistent US policy, which was exemplified by, among other things, the abandonment of the position that Phoumi should hold a key cabinet post in favor of a position that would enable Souvanna to control the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

The Ambassador replied that the US had consistently followed a policy of being prepared to support a coalition only if satisfied that such a coalition offered a reasonable chance of keeping Laos independent, truly neutral, and "not an easy prey for Communists." Thanat, in the opinion of the Ambassador, remained annoyed with the US for exerting pressure on Phoumi while allegedly overlooking Communist outrages.

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 756, 18 Nov 61, 758, 18 Nov 61, and 771, 21 Nov 61.

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18 Nov 61 Deputy Under Secretary of State Johnson informed the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Bundy, that the augmentation of the FAR proposed by the Department of Defense (see item 19 October 1961) had been disapproved. In addition to the obvious problem of obtaining additional AID funds, Johnson said, the Defense request raised a difficult political problem. Phoumi, he said, by integrating large numbers of poorly trained irregulars into the regular combat forces of the FAR, had unilaterally increased the FAR force level well beyond its present authorized strength. Approval of the Defense request for augmentation would constitute a belated US recognition of these unilateral changes. In view of Phoumi's recent reluctance to follow US advice "on matters of greatest urgency," the US could not afford to accede in this fait accompli.

However,

However, the Under Secretary concluded, if Phoumi evinced greater willingness to follow US advice, if he abolished the unauthorized forces, and if he demonstrated a willingness to consult with and obtain the approval of CHMAAG Laos on matters concerning the structure and organization of the FAR, then the Department of State would be willing to reconsider the Defense request.

(The Acting Assistant Secretary, in informing the JCS of the above action on 22 November, requested their views on the "present need" for such an augmentation so that, if necessary, the Department of State could be asked to reconsider the Defense request. See items 2 and 18 December 1961.)

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(TS) Ltr, DepUSecState to ActgAsstSecDef (ISA), 18 Nov 61, att to Memo, OASD (ISA) to CJCS, 22 Nov 61. Both in JCS 2344/23, 27 Nov 61.

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19 Nov 61 Ambassador Harriman, in a message from Geneva for the Secretary of State, said "emphatically" that in his judgment Phoumi should abandon his position of demanding for himself the posts of Minister of Defense and Interior and for the non-Xieng Khouang neutrals four of the eight cabinet posts reserved for the center group. Souvanna, the Ambassador continued, was determined to control Defense and Interior and also was intent upon having six of his Xieng Khouang faction in the government. Mr. Harriman then pointed out that Souvanna had suggested additions to the cabinet which could give up to four places to non-Xieng Khouang neutrals. The Ambassador suggested that this enlargement, as well as the over-all composition of the cabinet, "be made an area of trading, both in numbers and quality."

In conclusion

In conclusion, Ambassador Harriman stated that the only US hope for a neutral Laos lay in strengthening Souvanna and expressed his belief that Phoumi was an "inadequate instrument to further US policy in a government of national unity." Although aware of the obvious risks of supporting a Souvanna government, the Ambassador believed that these risks could be reduced if the US were to convince Souvanna of its intention to support him, provided he remained free from Communist domination.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 866, 19 Nov 61.

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20 Nov 61

The Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) prepared for its own use another summary of the situation in Laos (see item 20 July 1961). After examining various facets of the Laotian problem, the summary concluded that:

1. The Communists had probably achieved most of their immediate objectives in Laos and could not be expected to give up, as a result of negotiations, the territory that they had seized.

2. The Soviets, although expressing a willingness to negotiate seriously at Geneva, had made few concessions, while the US had made many. The agreements reached, however, probably represented the best that could be obtained without resort to force.

3. Unless the US could convince the Communists that it was prepared to use force, it was doubtful that Phoumi could become Minister of Defense or of Interior in a government headed by Souvanna. Should the US force Phoumi to yield either of these posts, he might also yield on issues which the US considered vital to its interests.

4. To

4. To achieve a political settlement that would insure a neutral Laos, the US should, at the least, obtain safeguards for a "conservative beachhead" in the Souvanna government, insist on a neutral center group representing all of Laos, and obtain for Phoumi a major cabinet post. In addition, the US would have to win acceptance of a Geneva accord embodying the following fundamental points:

- a) The US would not terminate its military assistance program until the ICC was fully effective.
- b) The ICC would have authority to make investigations throughout Laos at the request of any member and without being subjected to an RLG veto.
- c) The voting procedure within the ICC would be at least as favorable to the West as under the 1954 agreement.
- d) The ICC would be reorganized to assist the RLG in preventing the use of Laos as a military base or route of transit for purposes of aggression.
- e) The RLG would be allowed the services of either French or neutral military missions.

The conclusions were based upon a study of 1) negotiations among the three Princes, 2) the projected formation of a coalition cabinet, 3) the meetings at the Geneva Conference, 4) the expected reorganization of the FAR, 5) the unauthorized increase in the FAR and the resultant financial difficulties, and 6) the Lao clandestine army. These topics were summarized as follows:

Negotiations among the three Princes. Although the King had chosen Souvanna to head the coalition government, the Princes had been unable to agree on the site at which to discuss carrying out this royal mandate. At any such meeting, the US would have to try to convince both Phoumi and Souvanna that their survival depended upon mutual cooperation.

Formation

Formation of a coalition government. Although the Princes had agreed on a 4-8-4 distribution of cabinet posts there was no agreement on the assignment of portfolios or on the composition of the eight-man neutral center. Since Souvanna had indicated willingness to expand the size of the cabinet, thus affording representation to neutrals from outside his own camp, the US was urging Phoumi to hold out for a balanced center group rather than to demand a fixed numerical ratio. It remained imperative, however, that critical portfolios be denied to the Pathet Lao.

The Geneva Conference. The principal issues under discussion thus far were the powers and functions of the ICC, its voting procedures, the relationship between a neutral Laos and SEATO, and the continued French presence in Laos.

The US desired that the ICC have free access to all Laos, operate a network of permanent inspection posts, and possess its own supply centers. The USSR objected to or offered counterproposals to all these demands, and the US delegation had been authorized to abandon its position on ICC-controlled supply points. In addition, the West had accepted, in place of the ICC's right of free and unrestricted access, a provision stating that the ICC's rights of access would be determined in relation to the requirements of a particular investigation. (See item 12 Jan 62.)

On the subject of the ICC's internal procedures, the USSR, while agreeing that members might file minority reports, insisted that the commission's conclusions and recommendations have the unanimous endorsement of the membership. The Soviets also maintained that the ICC, when "in agreement

agreement with" the Lao government, could initiate investigations upon a majority vote.

The issue of the Laotian relationship to SEATO could best be settled, according to the Soviets, by the adoption of a resolution under the terms of which the SEATO powers would agree to respect a Laotian declaration renouncing the protection of military alliances. In return for this "satisfactory solution" of the SEATO question, the USSR would agree to the inclusion in the declaration of Lao neutrality of a clause prohibiting the use of Laos as an invasion corridor.

The Soviets, addressing the question of French presence in a neutral Laos, stated that the French could remain during a brief period of transition, after which they would have to abandon their installations.

The issues yet to be decided at Geneva were the time limit for the withdrawal of foreign military personnel, provision for ICC assistance in the implementation of the declaration of neutrality, and the elimination from Laos of private armies. The USSR, however, had stated that discussion by the conference of this last issue was "absolutely unacceptable."

Reorganization of the FAR. A general plan of integration had been agreed upon by the Allied Ambassadors at Vientiane (see item 20 October 1961). However, the Departments of State and Defense believed that the plan, when presented to Phoumi, would have to specify the following: 1) that the formula for the integration of factional armed forces into a new national Army would have to be decided upon before the process of integration began; 2) that no elections could be held until the armies had been integrated and



and the surplus personnel demobilized; 3) that the agreement of the three parties on the reconstitution of a Lao national Army should be included in the Geneva agreement; and 4) that an early agreement should be reached on the composition of the Army (preferably with the police under control of the Ministry of Interior rather than Defense), its relative strength, and the nation's military policy.

The UK and France, reluctant to present a detailed plan to Phoumi and Souvanna lest the over-all negotiations be further complicated, preferred that a "general plan" be presented to the two Laotian leaders.

Unauthorized FAR increase and resultant financial difficulties. The Department of Defense on 19 October had requested the Department of State to authorize an increase in FAR strength from 38,487 to 46,921. Phoumi, however, without US approval had already increased his force to 53,981, thus incurring a monthly deficit of \$360,000. It was feared that Phoumi would resort to borrowing from the National Bank of Laos, and he had been warned that such a course of action could lead to the collapse of the Laotian financial structure. The US also was concerned that RLG foreign exchange resources might be appropriated by officials of that government if it appeared that the US was withdrawing its support. As a result, the Department of State was considering closer controls over Lao finances.

The Lao clandestine army. Rather than an army, this was merely a grouping of auto defense companies, guerrilla units, and minority tribes. Phoumi intended to use these units in the event that hostilities were resumed or if, after the formation of a coalition government, Pathet Lao forces managed to evade the process of integration and demobilization

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(S) "Current Laotian Situation," 20 Nov 61, OASD,  
FER/SEA Branch files.

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27 Nov,  
14 Dec 61

The US Ambassador in Vientiane on 27 November forwarded to the Secretary of State a series of comments on the various problems that had been raised concerning the re-establishment of a Lao national police force. Among the more important of these comments were the following:

1. It was necessary to reach, as soon as possible, a detailed but informal understanding with the French concerning the organization, strength, role, training, and equipment of a national police force.

2. The French former director of the Lao national police, a Major Deuve, had established good relations with the USOM and would be available for any discussion of police problems that might be held at Vientiane.

3. Although French primacy in both training and operations would have to be recognized, the US, if it was to contribute funds, should retain some influence over police policy and operations.

4. The Lao police, though it was understood that they must be loyal to Souvanna as Prime Minister, should be oriented to respect the kingdom, its government, and its laws, rather than to fix their allegiance upon any individual.

5. A goal of 6,000 men, including gendarmes, was more realistic than the 10,000 desired by Souvanna.

6. Police personnel should not be recruited from among all three factions. (It was hoped that the better elements of the existing RLQ police could be incorporated into the new organization.)

7. All

7. All civilian internal security forces should be grouped under one ministry, presumably that of Interior. If the French insisted upon military control of the gendarmerie, the US should maintain that the gendarmes were not properly police and could not, except under conditions of martial law, have police jurisdiction over civilians. In rural areas, the French-trained gendarmerie, with its heavier weapons, would support the US-trained police.

8. During discussions with the French, the US should strive for French acceptance of the maximum share possible of the costs of the police program. There seemed, however, to be no need for the US to set forth at this time the basic concepts, including the estimated costs, of the Ryan Plan.

On 14 December, the Department of State, in commenting upon the views of Ambassador Brown, agreed that the ideal solution, regarding which it was hoped the Ambassador could reach an understanding with the French, was a program jointly administered and organized by the US and France. The Department's message also expressed hope that the US Ambassador could establish a close working relationship with Major Deuve.

Several basic factors, however, were to be considered by Ambassador Brown in negotiating an understanding with the French. First, the Department of State warned that US position and influence under Souvanna's regime would be "vastly different" than in the past and that an attempt to re-establish this past position might result in a further weakening of Souvanna's undoubtedly fragile coalition. In addition, the police and gendarmes should be composed mainly of Souvanna's followers. Although the Department of State

had

had no objection to including elements of the RLG police loyal to Souvanna, elements opposed to him should not be recruited. Furthermore, the Department raised no objection to the use of a French-trained gendarmerie to support the US-trained provincial police, provided that both the gendarmerie and the police were separate organizations within the Ministry of Interior and provided also that Souvanna would accept such an arrangement. Finally, the Ambassador was informed that his proposed negotiating tactics were concurred in by the Department of State, although it was not considered necessary to withhold from the French the basic concept of the Ryan Plan.

(On 30 December, Ambassador Brown reported that Major Deuve, having studied the Ryan Plan in its entirety, was in full agreement with its basic concepts. The French officer did, however, believe that the force goals were slightly too high and that the large amount of automotive equipment was unrealistic. Revisions along these lines were already underway.

As for the French concept of the Lao gendarmerie, Ambassador Brown had received no indication that this organization would be other than a special force of military personnel, under the control of the Minister of Defense and charged with the task of supporting the police in maintaining internal security.

The British military attache, Ambassador Brown also reported, had studied the Ryan Plan, had expressed approval, and had stated his belief that the UK would be fully prepared to support such an undertaking.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 770, 27 Nov 61; (S) Msg State to Vientiane, 557, 14 Dec 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 904, 29 Dec 61.

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The

28-29  
Nov 61

The meetings at which delegations from the Xieng Khouang and Vientiane factions were attempting to agree upon arrangements for the visit of Souvanna and Souphanouvong to Vientiane (See item 16 November 1961) came to an abrupt end on 28 November, when Souvanna's delegate broke off the negotiations. The principal differences that occasioned the break were the number of armed retainers for the visiting Princes and the demilitarization of the meeting site.

Later that day, Souvanna sent to Vientiane a message proposing that the meeting of the Princes be shifted to Hin Heup. On 29 November, however, the RLG refused Souvanna's latest offer and called instead for a meeting at Vientiane.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 785, 1 Dec 61.

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29 Nov 61

The Director, FER/SEA Branch, prepared for use by OASD (ISA) a comparison of currently agreed articles pertaining to the role of the ICC in Laos with those equivalent articles originally proposed in the US/French and Soviet drafts submitted to the Geneva Conference. This comparison showed that neither the conference co-chairmen, the drafting committee, nor restricted meetings of key delegations to the conference had been able to reach agreement on Laos-SEATO relations, the reconstitution of Lao forces, or the link between the declaration of neutrality and its accompanying protocol.

The drafting committee, however, had agreed upon: a preamble; a definition of the term "military personnel"; a method of controlling the withdrawal of foreign troops; controls over the introduction into Laos of foreign troops and arms; a method of repatriating prisoners; the role of the International Control Commission in controlling

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the cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the "non-entry" of foreign military personnel; the manner of RLG cooperation with the ICC; the duration of the ICC; and the date of entry into force of the agreement. (Although the drafting committee was agreed concerning the cooperation between RLG and ICC, the Lao representatives had expressed reservations on this issue.)

In addition, the drafting committee had reached provisional agreement concerning the costs of the ICC.

The co-chairmen had reached tentative agreement on the deadline for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the continued French presence, the role of the ICC in controlling the introduction of arms into Laos, ICC voting procedures, ICC machinery, ICC investigations, and the relationship between the co-chairmen and the ICC (Cf. item 16, 18 September 1961).

Finally, the co-chairmen and the principal delegations at the conference had agreed to the text of an article dealing with ICC equipment. (See items 8 November 1961 and 2 December 1961.)

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(C) "14-Nation Agreement, Terms of Reference for ICC," 29 Nov 61, OASD (ISA), FER/SEA Br files.

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29 Nov 61

Chairman Sen of the ICC sent Souvanna a message expressing concern over the breaking off of the talks dealing with arrangements for a meeting of the Princes (see item 28-29 November 1961). According to the Chairman, the only solution to the existing impasse was for Souvanna and Souphanouvong, each with a 110 or 120-man escort and civilian staff, to visit Vientiane on a specified date.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 792, 1 Dec 61.

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29 Nov 61

The US Country Team in Laos replied to the State-Defense-ICA queries of 23 October (see item) regarding FAR budgetary practices. According to the Country Team, Phoumi had been using the money budgeted for nonexistent ADO units to activate additional volunteer companies; the total amount expended for this purpose from 1 January through 1 October had been \$396,231. At present Phoumi was diverting funds from all other chapters of the FAR budget to pay his overstrength.

The Country Team stated that the Ambassador and CHMAAG would inform Phoumi that he was defeating all efforts to make the FAR more effective by increasing his force levels without US approval. He had already been told, in a 24 October letter from CHMAAG, that the US could not recognize force levels in excess of those currently authorized; he had at that time been asked to stop recruiting new troops. (See, however, items 17 November and 2 December 1961.)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to OSD, DA IN 177724, 29 Nov 61.

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30 Nov 61

In evaluating "Chinese Communist Capabilities and Intentions in the Far East," Special National Intelligence Estimate 13-3-61 envisioned the probable Chinese Communist reaction to SEATO or US combat forces coming to the defense of Laos or South Viet Nam. Echoing an earlier estimate (see item 5 July 1961), the SNIE believed that the Chinese would initially increase their aid to the PL and DRV while deploying substantial forces along the South China border. In the more extreme case where a SEATO or US action constituted a threat that the DRV forces could not counter, the Chinese would "almost certainly" intervene overtly; the Chinese would

would "probably" intervene even if the threat was only against the Communist position in northern Laos.

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(S) SNIE 13-3-61, 30 Nov 61; J-2 Sect.

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30 Nov 61 The Department of Defense, with JCS concurrence, requested that the Department of the Army deliver seven L-20 aircraft and appropriate spares to CHMAAG Laos, for use as administrative airlift. (See item 28 September 1961)

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(S) Msg, OSD to DA et al., DEF 906415, 30 Nov 61.

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30 Nov 61 According to CHMAAG's daily situation report, the Northern Command of the FAR was continuing its clearing sweeps, the Central Command remained in a defensive posture, and the Southern Command continued anti-guerrilla operations. The above dispositions had remained relatively unchanged since the "intensified efforts" directed by Phoumi (see item 4 November 1961).

In the Northern Command, the clearing sweeps, begun on 6 November, were four-pronged: 1) along a front from the southeast to the northeast of Luang Prabang; 2) northeast from the Muong Houn front toward Muong Sai; 3) southeast from the Nam Tha front toward Muong Sai; and 4) north and south along the Mekong Valley in Sayaboury Province. No significant progress was reported during November.

The Central Command remained in defensive posture except for a two battalion sweep conducted northward from Paksane from 21 to 25 November.

In the Southern Command, there was no evidence that Lao guerrilla units had begun to harass Viet Cong routes. The principal reported actions were sweeps. GM 14, operating southwest of Thakhek, and GM 15, east of Savannakhet, conducted



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conducted relatively uneventful local patrols. GM 18, however, conducted a successful clearing operation through Attapeu province, reaching its objective of Ban Hin Lat on 13 November, destroying while on patrol a Pathet Lao training compound of approximately 50 buildings.

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(TS) JCS SEA Sitreps 1-61 to 5-61, 2 to 30 Nov 61; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC; DA IN 170561, 4 Nov 61; DA IN 171180, 6 Nov 61; DA IN 171848, 7 Nov 61; DA IN 171846, 8 Nov 61; DA IN 173443, 14 Nov 61; DA IN 175849, 21 Nov 61; DA IN 176709, 25 Nov 61; DA IN 177082, 26 Nov 61; DA IN 178749, 28 Nov 61; DA IN 178764, 30 Nov 61.

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1 Dec 61 The Director of Military Assistance, OASD (ISA), raised the authorized MAP-supported US personnel for MAAG Laos from 253 to 280 (see item 26 June 1961). In so acting, the Director was adopting, with some modification, a 21 September recommendation by CINCPAC, endorsed to the Secretary of Defense by the JCS on 15 November.

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(C) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, w/encls, 21 Sep 61, att to JCS 1849/581, 26 Sep 61. (C) JCSM-789-61 to SecDef, 15 Nov 61, derived from JCS 1849/617, 3 Nov 61. (C) 1st N/H of JCS 1849/617, 8 Dec 61. All in JMF 1040.1 (14 Apr 61).

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1, 4 Dec  
61

After observing that Phoumi had thus far resisted US pressure to force him into negotiating for the establishment of a coalition government, Ambassador Brown on 1 December informed the Secretary of State that Phoumi, if he chose to do so, could confront the US with any of several difficult situations. If Phoumi refused to accept a settlement satisfactory to the US, he could: 1) withdraw entirely from Laotian politics and create in his followers feelings of bitterness toward the US; 2) establish a rebel state in southern Laos; or 3) remain in office and seek to block negotiations.

In response to Ambassador Brown's message, the Secretary of State on 4 December offered comments and instructions concerning Phoumi's possible courses of action. Should Phoumi withdraw from the political arena, the US would make the best possible deal with Souvanna concerning the establishment of a coalition government. The Secretary of State agreed with Ambassador Brown that the US should attempt to forestall any separatist movement and try to avoid allowing Phoumi to involve the US in military action contrary to national policy.

If

If Phoumi chose, as seemed most likely, to thwart negotiations while remaining in office, the US Ambassador was to approach Souvanna directly and inform him that the US would support his government in maintaining the genuine neutrality of Laos. Should Souvanna, with the advice of the US Ambassador, succeed in forming a satisfactory cabinet, Phoumi would be given the choice of either cooperating or being abandoned by the US.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 789, 1 Dec 61; State to Vientiane, NIACT 524, 4 Dec 61.

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1-13 Dec  
61

Souvanna on 1 December informed Boun Oum of his willingness to hold a meeting of the Princes at Vientiane, provided that both he and Souphanouvong were permitted security escorts of 110 men and civilian staffs numbering 30, and provided that a demilitarized zone was established at the meeting site.

On 4 December, in what Ambassador Brown termed a "piece of gamesmanship designed to put [the] other side in [the] wrong and to avoid [a] three Prince meeting in Vientiane," Boun Oum countered with an offer to visit the Plaine des Jarres, relying on the ICC to provide for his security, if Souvanna, also without personal military escort, would come to Vientiane for future meetings.

Souvanna on 6 December invited Boun Oum to meet with him and Souphanouvong on the Plaine des Jarres on 8 December. Boun Oum was to be allowed to bring with him a 110-man escort and a personal suite of 30 men. Boun Oum, however, responded on 8 December by repeating his offer of 4 December. In spite of Boun Oum's reply, Phoumi informed the US Ambassador that he would agree to Souvanna's visiting

Vientiane

Vientiane on the terms specified in that Prince's message of 1 December.

Souvanna on 11 December repeated his offer to bring Souphanouvong with him on an escorted journey to Vientiane. Although Souvanna repeated in substance the conditions stated in his message of 1 December, the RLG, in spite of Phoumi's assurances to the contrary, chose to ignore the suggestion. Thus, in a message released on 12 December, Boun Oum merely repeated his offer to go unescorted to the Plaine des Jarres.

On the 13th, however, the RLG acted as Phoumi had indicated it would; Boun Oum informed Souvanna that he and a small group of advisers would visit the Plaine des Jarres on the following day (see item 14 December 1961). Future visits by Souvanna and Souphanouvong to Vientiane, the message continued, would be conducted under the conditions set forth by Souvanna on 1 December.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 803, 4 Dec 61; 820, 8 Dec 61; 826, 11 Dec 61; 836, 13 Dec 61; (S) Msg, State to Vientiane, NIACT 534, 9 Dec 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 812, 7 Dec 61; 819, 8 Dec 61; 797, 3 Dec 61; (OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 800, 4 Dec 61.

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2 Dec 61 Ambassador Harriman reported to the Secretary of State that during the past week the US, UK, Soviet, Indian, French, and Communist Chinese delegations had agreed on the text of articles dealing with ICC voting procedures, investigations inspection teams, and the relationship between the Geneva co-chairmen and the ICC. The issues yet to be resolved in restricted meetings were the relationship between a neutral Laos and SEATO, a time limit on the withdrawal of foreign troops, the French presence, and the integration of factional armies (see item 29 November, 11 and 13 December 1961).

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 923, 2 Dec 61; 971, 17 Dec 61; 981, 23 Dec 61.

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Phoumi

2 Dec 61. Phoumi informed an "AEG representative" that he would not "capitulate" to Souvanna, even at the risk of losing US military and economic support as a result of his intransigence. Should the US cut off its aid, Phoumi continued, he would: 1) establish a dictatorship; 2) attack toward Muong Soui, Xieng Khouang, and Mahaxay; and 3) in the event the Viet Minh reacted in force, retreat into Thailand. Phoumi said that he had discussed this strategy with both Sarit and King Savang. Sarit had not committed the Thai Government to support the plan, but he had inquired into the war capability of the FAR in the event US aid was halted. (Phoumi did not disclose the King's reaction.)

The RLG Minister of Defense also stated that he had learned from various sources that the US was eager to withdraw from Laos and leave the training of the FAR to the French.

Turning to the plan for the integration of the Lao armed forces (see items 20 October and 3 November 1961), which had been presented to him the week before, Phoumi declared that the scheme was unrealistic.

CHMAAG, in reporting this conversation to CINCPAC, stated that the threat to renew hostilities "could be a Phoumi bluff in an attempt to change US policy on a Souvanna government and to safeguard his own position." General Boyle believed that Phoumi "must realize" that his plan would "thwart the US effort to have a strong anti-Communist element within the coalition government," that the FAR would become ineffective without US aid, and that certain FAR generals probably would not remain loyal to a Phoumi dictatorship.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG, Laos, to CINCPAC, DA IN 179127, 2 Dec 61

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CHMAAG

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2 Dec 61 CHMAAG Laos and the Lao Ministry of National Security, in accordance with the MAAG-Phoumi agreement of 17 November (see item) completed a plan to reduce the strength of the FAR by about 9,000 men in four monthly increments. (See item 18 December 1961)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 179237, 2 Dec 61.

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5 Dec 61 The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Bundy, informed the JCS that contingency planning for the withdrawal of all US military forces and equipment from Laos should commence at once. If the current progress of the Geneva Conference continued and the "Three Princes" meetings in Laos were successful, Bundy said, a peaceful settlement might be obtained within a few weeks. In such an agreement the US would be required to withdraw all its military forces, perhaps within 60 days after the entry into force of the agreement. Mr. Bundy requested the recommendations of the JCS on this matter. (See items 26 December 1961 and 14 February 1962.)

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(S) Memo, OASD(ISA) to CJCS, 5 Dec 61, att to JCS 2344/24, 7 Dec 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (5 Dec 61).

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11 Dec 61 At a restricted meeting in Geneva, the continued French presence in Laos was agreed upon and a time limit fixed for the withdrawal of foreign troops (see item 12 January 1962).

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 971, 17 Dec 61.

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14 Dec 61 Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that he had persuaded Phoumi to call off a "substantial attack" on Tha

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on Tha Vieng and Tha Tom, to have been conducted by FAR and Meo forces on 16 December. When Ambassador Brown had learned of the planned attack, he had first sought and received verification from Phoumi. He had then told Phoumi "this simply could not happen"; such an attack might destroy and chance for successful negotiation. If Phoumi allowed the planned attack to proceed, the Ambassador had told the Lao leader, "all MAAG teams would be called away, there would be not one helicopter, not one aircraft and no munition in support of the operation . . . ." Phoumi replied that he would try to call off the operation. (He obviously did so.) (See item 2 January 1962.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 840, 14 Dec 61.

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14 Dec 61 Boun Oum visited the Plaine des Jarres and conferred with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. The communique issued after the meeting merely stated that they had reaffirmed the need to establish a coalition government and that they would meet as soon as possible in Vientiane to take concrete steps toward the formation of such a government.

In a conversation with the US Ambassador, Boun Oum elaborated on this terse communique. He reported that the Princes had talked of a cabinet composed of four RLG conservatives, four members of the Pathet Lao party, and eight neutrals -- half from the Vientiane and half from the Xieng Khouang neutralists. The key portfolios of Defense, Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Finance also were discussed. The Princes agreed to meet again on 26 December at Vientiane.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 846, 15 Dec 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 842, 14 Dec 61.

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CHMAAG

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14 Dec 61 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that, in view of the possibility that a neutral RLG might successfully be formed, he was planning for the removal of excess MAP materiel and equipment from Lao territory. CHMAAG, postulating future FAR force structure at 20,000 men, planned to attempt the recovery of excesses in:

1. Items with a "war making potential," such as individual and crew served weapons.
2. High dollar-value items, such as late model vehicles and communications equipment.
3. Items in short supply in US supply channels.

(On 23 December, CINCPAC authorized CHMAAG to continue to plan along the above lines. See item 24 January 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 187345, 23 Dec 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 240420Z Jan 62.

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16 Dec 61 The Secretary of Defense, CJCS, and other DOD officials met with CINCPAC and US officials from Saigon in Hawaii, to review the progress of US action in South Viet Nam. During the review of Viet Cong operations, the Secretary asked what number of the 17,000 Viet Cong in South Viet Nam had come overland by way of Laos. CHMAAG South Viet Nam estimated that 25% had come this way; the major point of infiltration from Laos was just south of the 17th parallel (near Tchepone in Laos).

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(TS) Record of SecDef Conf at Hq. CINCPAC, 16 Dec 61, att to JCS 2343/60, 26 Dec 61; JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61).

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18 Dec 61 The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the Department of State again be urged to approve FAR force augmentation (see items 9 September and 4 October 1961). The JCS stated the requirement for augmentation was still valid; and they noted that the attitude and

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actions of Phoumi, which had been the principal reason for the original State disapproval (see item 18 November 1961) had recently changed for the better (see items 30 October, 17 November, and 2 December 1961). Moreover, CINCPAC had, on 28 November, again strongly endorsed the augmentation. The JCS considered, in addition, that failure to approve this augmentation might be construed as a lessening of US efforts to stabilize and improve the military situation in all of Southeast Asia.

(On 17 January 1962 the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the JCS that "soundings" taken at the Department of State on FAR augmentation had indicated that "a formal request would at best elicit a formal rejection on grounds of overriding political considerations." At the first opportune moment, however, the Acting Assistant Secretary said, the Department of Defense would be prepared to lay the request again before the Department of State.)

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(S) JCSM-872-61 to SecDef, 18 Dec 61, derived from JCS 2344/25, 13 Dec 61; (S) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/25, 22 Jan 62. Both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (9 Sep 61). (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 177087, 28 Nov 61.

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18 Dec 61 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had, in a recent conversation, come down hard against a future French presence in Laos. Phoumi thought that the Soviet support of a French presence was based on their belief that the FAR would be weakened by French indifference and inefficiency and that the weakened FAR could be infiltrated and would offer no obstacle to continued infiltration of South Viet Nam. Phoumi also believed that the FAR would not welcome the French who had, in the past, done nothing to improve the economic or military situation of Laos.

CHMAAG believed that Phoumi was more disturbed by the possible continuance of a French presence than by any other agreement likely to issue from Geneva. Phoumi believed and CHMAAG thought him "probably right," that the French resented US influence in Laos, and would attempt, as they had in the past, to undermine it.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 185095, 18 Dec 61

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18 Dec 61 At a restricted meeting in Geneva, general provisional acceptance was given to all texts that earlier had been provisionally agreed upon. (The major issues not yet resolved by the end of the year were the integration of factional armies and the Laos-SEATO relationship.) (See item 12 January 1962.)

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 981, 23 Dec 61.

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20 Dec 61 In a message to CINCPAC, CHMAAG Laos set forth the assets the RLG would carry to the approaching three-princes meeting and ensuing negotiations (see item 27-30 December 1961). In the opinion of CHMAAG, an opinion in which [REDACTED] USARMA Vientiane, and the Ambassador concurred, the RLG approached the negotiations in a better position than it would have, had the meeting been held at the time of the cease-fire. He advanced the following reasons:

1. The combat potential of the FAR had increased. Five battalions had completed EKARAD training in Thailand, and a new program to strengthen and retrain the ADC was underway. The first officer training class would graduate 195 leaders in February; specialist training programs were turning out communications, medical, logistics, and maintenance technicians; and the Lao T-6 pilots

had

had increased their proficiency. The FAR logistical situation had also improved. Finally, the acceptance by the Lao of US advisors was "at a new high" and the expanded US advisory effort itself had stimulated new aggressiveness in unit commanders, and inspired better performance under fire by both officers and men.

2. The FAR military situation had greatly improved. The FAR was carrying the battle to the enemy in many areas where the cease-fire did not hamper operations. The volunteer, ADC, and Meo irregular forces under Vang Pao had virtually isolated the Plaine des Jarres and could, if authorized, expand their operations into Sam Neua and the "Thai-Lao autonomous zone" of the DRV. The enemy had been forced to divert larger and larger numbers of troops to the protection of lines of communication. Additional guerrilla organizations were now being formed in Sayaboury province, in the area north and east of Thakhek, and among the Kha tribesmen of the Bolovens plateau. All gave promise of success.

3. The RLG had increased its popularity among the people. The Communists were feared and unpopular among the people because of their harsh treatment of the peasantry. On the other hand, RLG information and aid programs had had their effects; moreover Prince Boun Oum was very popular throughout Laos. The Prince had travelled widely and fearlessly to the "grassroots" of Laos, winning the populace to the RLG cause.

4. There was an apparently widening rift between the PL and the Kong Le forces. The number of defectors to the RLG from Kong Le's forces had increased during November and should, because of lack of pay, food shortages, and the

incessant

incessent propagandizing of the Pathet Lao, continue to increase. In addition, significant numbers of civilians were attempting to transfer themselves from Kong Le/PL to RLG protection.

(See items 23 December 1961 and 5 January 1962.)

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 185983, 20 Dec 61.

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22 Dec 61 The JCS approved CINCPAC OPLAN 93A-61, one of the "family of plans" directed by the JCS on 28 September against the contingency that the USSR would block allied access to Berlin. OPLAN 93-61 submitted by CINCPAC on 14 October 1961, had as its mission the conducting of US air operations in support of Laotian efforts against the Communist airlift in Laos. CINCPACAF would conduct the operations, but CHMAAG Laos would effect the necessary liaison with RLG officials and establish the requirements for missions.

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(TS) CINCPAC OPLAN 93A-61, 14 Oct 61; JMF 3146 (14 Oct 61) sec 1. (TS) Dec on JCS 2054/470, 22 Dec 61; JMF 3146 (14 Oct 61) sec 2.

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22 Dec 61 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that the MAAG was organizing, equipping, and beginning to train <sup>2</sup> the Kha guerrilla unit for operations in the eastern Plateau des Bolovens. Approximately six more Kha units could be formed in the area, CHMAAG said; and additional tribesmen might eventually be organized further to the north and east. The Kha presently were anti-PL but not pro-RLG; they were concerned principally with preservation of their traditional areas. They were, however, aggressive people who would form, CHMAAG hoped, into "light, hard hitting guerrilla units." [REDACTED] planned a combined program patterned after the Meo program to bring the Kha into the RLG camp.

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[REDACTED] was providing the initial weapons stocks for the Kha, CHMAAG said. Phoumi had cooperated by recognizing the first unit as a bona fide FAR ADC unit.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 221540Z Dec 61.

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22 Dec 61 Under Secretary of State Ball asked the US Ambassador in Vientiane for Country Team comments on draft instructions for a discussion with Souvanna of the economic aid that the US was willing to grant to a neutral Laos. Ambassador Brown was authorized, if he deemed it desirable, to present this program to Souvanna when the latter visited Vientiane for the meeting of the Princes.

The Ambassador was to explain that the US was prepared to share with other nations in a program of economic aid for Laos. For the time being, however, the US would continue to maintain the kingdom's financial stability. Souvanna's government would be expected to "make the maximum contribution from its resources" and to use American aid in a responsible manner.

Although the US was willing to continue, as interim measures, its support of the Laotian currency and its cash grants for specific purposes, some more effective form of assistance would have to be found. No longer would the US guarantee the Laotian military budget. Instead, a specific amount would be granted for "general budgetary purposes." The Lao government would then be responsible for allocating funds "according to its own evaluation of all competing needs." In addition, an acceptable remedy would have to be found for the ills caused by excessive RLG borrowing from the National Bank of Laos.

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As to the kingdom's economic development, which was considered "our primary joint objective," the US was willing to continue its present activities in education, rural development, construction, and relief, so that Laotian "human resources" might be developed concurrently with the "economic infrastructure." The US believed, however, that an intensive survey of the Lao economy was needed to provide guidance for a "realistic program of economic development." In addition, the US was prepared to assist in obtaining aid from other nations and from international organizations.

(On 27 December, Ambassador Brown replied that the aid program was "in line with our thinking." He believed, however, that the US should concentrate for the present on the formation of a coalition government. If Souvanna succeeded in forming a government, the offer of assistance could then be made. The Ambassador also noted that to "negotiate" with Souvanna at this time would jeopardize US relations with the existing RLG. Instead of discussing a detailed program, Ambassador Brown would "reassure Souvanna in a general way that the US was ready to give generous assistance to a truly neutral government."

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(S) Msgs, State to Vientiane, DEPTel 563, 22 Dec 61; Vientiane to SecState, 887, 27 Dec 61.

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23 Dec 61 CINCPAC cabled to the JCS that, "if the Communists were to sit down now and assess the progress of their plans for Southeast Asia, . . . their appraisal would closely approximate the following":

1. The situation in Southeast Asia had never been more favorable for the advancement of Communist aims.

2. "Things

2. "Things are going well" in Laos. Military successes up through April 1961 had led the Communists to feel that they had the necessary "edge" at the bargaining table to assure a "neutral" Laos, with the Pathet Lao integrated into both the army and the government. Utilizing their normal tactics, the Communists could probably achieve the upper hand in Laos by ostensibly legal means within the next year; the negotiations on integration of the armed forces and formation of a coalition government would, in this regard, present them with a "sterling opportunity" to exploit the existing differences between various Lao political factions. Another advantage the Communists had realized was the "virtual elimination of the likelihood of US or SEATO military intervention." And the apparent acceptance by the US of a "neutral Laos" probably had convinced the Communists that another test of arms was, in any event, unlikely. But in the unlikely event that the RLG reneged on the integration scheme and attempted to maintain itself as a separate force, the Pathet Lao were well-prepared to resume hostilities.

3. In South Viet Nam, the Viet Cong were "making good progress in the field," at least in part because of their increased control of the Laos-South Viet Nam border areas. Although they were probably somewhat concerned about future US reactions in South Viet Nam, the Communists probably regarded the fall of the GVN as "only a matter of time."

4. After the fall of Laos and South Viet Nam, the Communist prospects in Thailand would be greatly improved, and the Communists would quickly turn their attention to that country

country. Under these circumstances either the Thai themselves would seek an accommodation with the Communists or, that failing, the standard techniques of subversion could be brought to bear.

Assuming, CINCPAC continued, that this hypothetical assessment was at all valid, the US and RLG must strive to obtain the best possible terms at the three-Princes meeting. Ambassador Brown had, to CINCPAC's mind, implied that the RLG should "go out of its way" to accommodate Souvanna. However, CHMAAG Laos saw the RLG bringing several assets into the negotiations (see item 20 December 1961). CINCPAC felt CHMAAG's assessment valid, and that "there was much to be gained and nothing to be lost by being tough as nails at the bargaining table."

(See item 5 January 1962.)

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 232035Z Dec 61.

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26 Dec 61 Ambassador Brown was granted an audience with the King. During their conversation, the King, who at times appeared morose, denied "talk" that he would serve as Prime Minister in a new government and expressed his belief that Souvanna would fail to form a successful coalition. In addition, the King complained that foreign countries had interfered in a purely domestic matter by attempting to force the acceptance of Souvanna as head of the national coalition and that the assurance given by SEATO had proved worthless because of divided counsels in that organization.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 882, 26 Dec 61.

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The Acting



26 Dec 61 The Acting Secretary of Defense requested the JCS to include, in their study of the possible withdrawal of US forces from Laos (see item 5 December 1961), their evaluation of a proposal that the personnel of MAAG Laos be organized at the time of withdrawal into a provisional tactical unit. This unit would evacuate in slow stages overland through Savannakhet province to South Viet Nam. This course of action would be, the Acting Secretary continued, a "show of force" to raise the morale of the peoples of Southeast Asia and to demonstrate the seriousness of US intentions; it might also, he concluded, produce some useful intelligence on Communist activities in the panhandle of Laos. (See item 14 February 1962.)

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(S) Memo, Actg SecDef to CJCS, 26 Dec 61, att to JCS 2344/27, 29 Dec 61; JMF 9155.2/3100 (5 Dec 61).

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26 Dec 61 The JCS approved for presentation to the SEATO nations CINCPAC's recommended changes to SEATO Plan 5. By CINCPAC's proposal, submitted to the JCS on 25 November, a third force, Force CHARLIE, would be added to Forces ALFA and BRAVO of the current plan (see item 5 April 1961). Force CHARLIE, to be composed of two US battle groups, would deploy to Pakse and be responsible for all Laos south of Seno. This area of Laos was, CINCPAC had stated, a principal area in which the insurgents were presently consolidating their positions. With Force CHARLIE, then, to assume some of Force BRAVO's responsibilities, the Thai battalion in BRAVO would be transferred to ALFA, as would a Pakistani battalion from Central Reserve. With these added forces, ALFA would take over from BRAVO responsibility for Thakhek. The revised composition of the combat forces in Laos

in Laos would be as follows:

Force ALFA

2	US BLTs
2	Thai battalions
1	Pakistani battalion

Force BRAVO

1	Australian battalion
1	New Zealander battalion
1	UK battalion

Force CHARLIE

2	US battle groups
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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 2715, 26 Dec 61, derived from JCS 2339/48, 19 Dec 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 176601, 25 Nov 61; all in JMF 9060/3100 (25 Nov 61).

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27 Dec 61 During the informal meeting of the three Princes at the Prime Minister's residence, Prince Boun Oum demanded that the eight-man "center group" in the coalition government be divided equally between the Vientiane and Xieng Khouang factions. He also demanded retention of Defense and Interior portfolios by the Vientiane faction until Souvanna "'proves'" his neutrality. There was no further need for a three-Prince meeting, said Boun Oum; he suggested that Souvanna should "get to work and form his cabinet."

Souphanouvong also demanded the Defense and Interior posts for his group, adding that if there were to be no negotiations he would return to Xieng Khouang. Souvanna's efforts to conciliate failed.

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(S-NOFORN), DIA Intelligence Bulletin, 36-61, 28 Dec 61, p. 1.

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27 Dec 61 The Secretary of State, in an "eyes only" message "confirm[ed]" Ambassador Brown's full authority to take action necessary to bring about an acceptable coalition government

government. Specifically, if Souvanna proved cooperative while Phoumi and Boun Oum did not, the Ambassador was empowered to go so far as to inform the present leaders of the RLG that the US would no longer support them, inform the King of this decision, and urge the King to appoint a new Prime Minister willing to negotiate in good faith. (See item 1-4 December 1961.)

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(TS) Msg, State to Vientiane, NIACT 571, 27 Dec 61.

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27-30 Dec  
61

The meeting of the Princes began on 27 December and almost immediately ran into a "substantial snag," when both Boun Oum and Souphanouvong claimed for their factions control over the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Ambassador Brown reported that after this first session he visited Souvanna, who claimed to be psychologically depressed because of Boun Oum's apparent ultimatum concerning the two cabinet posts. The Ambassador stated that the US would support a government headed by Souvanna and that he himself would do his best to bring about a genuine discussion rather than a mere exchange of demands.

Although no formal meeting of the Princes was held on 28 December, the leaders of the three factions exchanged their views. Ambassador Brown reported that Souvanna had informed Phoumi that Defense and Interior would have to be controlled by neutralists, a position supported by Souphanouvong. Souvanna had stated that he intended to keep the Defense portfolio for himself and to give the Interior portfolio to Pheng Phongsavang who was of Souvanna's own faction.

On 29 December, Souvanna and Boun Oum discussed the composition of the cabinet but were unable to agree upon

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upon the size and membership of the neutral central group. During the afternoon, however, Souphanouvong, claiming that foreign influence made it impossible for the Princes to reach agreement, left for the Plaine des Jarres.

The meeting came to a formal end on 30 December after Souvanna had visited the King and again talked with Phoumi. During the conversation with Phoumi, Phoumi proposed a 19-member cabinet -- 4 Communists, 4 conservatives, and a 10-man center group evenly divided between Xieng Khouang and Vientiane neutrals. Souvanna asked whether he, Souvanna, would control Defense and Interior under this scheme, but Phoumi said he needed time to consider the matter. Souvanna stated that if Phoumi's answer were affirmative, he and Souphanouvong would return to Vientiane to complete the negotiations.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 890, 27 Dec 61; 891, 27 Dec 61; 911, 30 Dec 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 897, 28 Dec 61; 901, 29 Dec 61; 902, 29 Dec 61; (OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 889, 27 Dec 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 909, 30 Dec 61.

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29 Dec 61     The Secretary of State, in a circular telegram, instructed the US Ambassadors at Canberra, London, Ottawa, and Paris to express to their respective host governments the hope that these nations would join the US in rendering economic aid to a Souvanna government. Although the US intended to continue its aid program at about the present levels, the coalition government would need additional financial and technical assistance. Participation in the aid program by Canada, the UK, Australia, and France would, in Secretary Rusk's opinion, demonstrate Western support of  
Souvanna

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Souvanna and increase the kingdom's chances of remaining truly neutral and independent.

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(C) Dept of State CIRC 1187, 29 Dec 61.

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29 Dec 61 Phoumi reported to CHMAAG that a coup, planned by adherents of Souvanna and Kong Le for the early hours of 29 December, had been thwarted. The purpose of the alleged coup had been to seize control of Vientiane while Souvanna and Souphanouvong were present for the meeting of the Princes. CHMAAG, however, informed CINCPAC that he "would not like to place too much weight on the accuracy of Phoumi report or extent of disaffection until we check further and sound out our sources."

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(S/NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 188485, 29 Dec 61.

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30 Dec 61 In a message to Ambassador Brown, the Department of State expressed its general acceptance of the 4-5-5-4 numerical ratio proposed by Phoumi (see item 27-30 December 1961). Souvanna's demand that his neutrals hold both the Defense and Interior portfolios also was considered acceptable. The Department, however, desired that Finance be in the hands of the Vientiane neutrals and that the influence that would be wielded by Pheng Phongsavan as Minister of Interior be offset by the choice of a strong and competent anti-Communist as his principal subordinate. Additional suggestions were made concerning other cabinet posts. Among the appointments found acceptable were the selection of Phoumi as Minister of Public Works and Vice Premier and the appointment of Souphanouvong as Minister of Planning.

Ambassador

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(S) Msg, State to Vientiane, NIACT 578, 30 Dec 61.

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30 Dec 61 Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, during a discussion of the composition of a coalition cabinet, Phoumi had said that "he had a final fall-back position of Souvanna as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense with Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Defense." It further appeared, according to the Ambassador, that Phoumi would prefer that Defense and Interior be divided between the RLG and the Pathet Lao rather than be entrusted to a neutral center group.

In commenting upon Ambassador Brown's report, Secretary Rusk agreed fully with the Ambassador's opposition to a division of Defense and Interior between the RLG and Pathet Lao, a situation "which would obviously create a chaotic and dangerous condition." The Secretary of State then reiterated the US position that the Pathet Lao should be restricted to minor cabinet posts.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 912, 30 Dec 61; State to Vientiane, NIACT 579, 30 Dec 61.

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31 Dec 61 In response to a request by the Department of State for comments on certain measures designed both to bring pressure on the RLG to follow sound fiscal practices and to prevent Phoumi or others from removing from US jurisdiction RLG foreign exchange resources, the US Ambassador in Vientiane concluded that the present informal understanding, by which  
the Chase

the Chase Manhattan Bank would inform the Department of State of any irregular RLG transactions, provided adequate protection to Lao financial reserves. Thus, the Ambassador recommended that no further action be taken at this time.

Among the possible courses of action listed by the Department of State and commented upon by Ambassador Brown were a cessation of cash grants, the halting of counterpart releases to support Lao currency, and the control of Lao external assets.

1. Cessation of cash grants. The Ambassador stated that this measure would have a "sledgehammer effect," particularly if all grants were stopped simultaneously. The US, however, might halt certain grants while continuing others, thus "twisting this type of sanction to almost any degree of effectiveness desired."

2. Halting counterpart releases. This sanction would, in the Ambassador's opinion, have almost the same effect as the cessation of cash grants. The RLG also would react in the same manner -- by increased borrowing from the Lao national bank. The resultant increase in the supply of local currency, if combined with the cessation of cash grants, would induce a run on the government's dollar reserves.

3. Controlling Lao external assets. In coming to his conclusion that the existing arrangement with the Chase Manhattan Bank was adequate to protect US interests, the Ambassador branded the US attachment of Lao funds in settlement of presently outstanding claims as "pointless and uselessly irritating to the RLG." Nor was the Ambassador eager to invoke any controls on RLG withdrawals which  
could

could, in the event of Lao improvidence, lead to suspension of the free convertability of the kip. If there were certain knowledge that Phoumi or others were attempting the fraudulent withdrawal of external assets for purposes contrary to US interests, the Trading with the Enemy Act might be invoked. The Ambassador, however, doubted that the US could ever obtain such knowledge. Finally, Ambassador Brown believed that the US might require a certification of the purposes for which the RLG was withdrawing its external assets. Such a procedure was not believed necessary at present because the acting governor of the Lao national bank, whose signature was required for any such transfers of funds, was "relatively incorruptible." If a new governor were appointed, certification procedures might reasonably be invoked.

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(S) Msgs, State to Vientiane, 564, 15 Dec 61; Vientiane to SecState, 914, 31 Dec 61.

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31 Dec 61 Ambassador Brown told Phoumi he was "convinced" that unless the portfolios of Defense and Interior went to Souvanna's neutrals, the negotiations among the Princes would collapse. Phoumi, however, expressed doubt that his colleagues in the RLG would allow him to yield even one of these positions and declared that it was time for concessions by the other side. The US Ambassador replied that his government believed Phoumi had gained "substantial concessions" from Souvanna. The time had come, Ambassador Brown continued, "to sell these two positions for the highest possible price." Although Phoumi appeared sad, the Ambassador termed the conversation "entirely friendly."

Later



Later in the day, after being advised that his refusal to cede the two positions could mean the end of US aid (see items 27 and 29 December 1961), Phoumi told another embassy officer that he was too shocked by the US defeatist policy to carry on. He maintained that the RLG cabinet would not yield the two posts to Souvanna's faction. When reminded that Ambassador Brown had been instructed to take drastic action in the event the RLG proved intransigent, Phoumi replied that he saw no use in having American support if all it meant was surrender to the enemy. Phoumi then warned that he might leave the kingdom and that Boun Oum might seek its partition. In commenting upon this interview, Ambassador Brown observed that "It appears that the US position has now been fully comprehended by Phoumi. His reaction is understandable."

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 915, 31 Dec 61; 916, 31 Dec 61.

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31 Dec 61 At year's end, the FAR combat commands were occupied as follows: the Northern and Southern Commands were both engaged in "clearing operations," as they had been during recent months (see item 30 November 1961); the Central Command, while retaining its primarily defensive posture, had stepped up operations near Tha Thom, north of Paksane.

In the Northern Command, the FAR captured the town of Ban Na Mo, approximately 15 miles east of Nam Tha, on 7 December, and began on 12 December relocating units to improve its position in the Muong Sai area.

The Central Command conducted reconnaissance patrols in the Tha Thom area in early December. During the last week in December, air strikes were conducted against enemy positions in the area.

The

The Southern Command conducted routine patrols throughout the month. On 19 December, CHMAAG learned that the FAR planned a three-phase operation to clear the Mahaxay and Nhommarath areas (see item 4 November 1961), but a few days later the FAR postponed this action until the three Princes had concluded their upcoming negotiations.

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(TS) JCS SEA Sitreps, 6-61 to 9-61, 7 to 28 Dec 61; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 179380, 4 Dec 61; DA IN 179867, 5 Dec 61; DA IN 180457, 6 Dec 61; DA IN 181305, 7 Dec 61; DA IN 181876, 8 Dec 61; DA IN 183158, 12 Dec 61; DA IN 184167, 14 Dec 61; DA IN 185536, 19 Dec 61; DA IN 187009, 23 Dec 61; DA IN 187135, 24 Dec 61; DA IN 187777, 26 Dec 61; DA IN 188099, 27 Dec 61; DA IN 188694, 30 Dec 61; DA IN 188923, 31 Dec 61; DA IN 188922, 1 Jan 62.

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS

FIFTH INSTALLMENT:

1 JANUARY to 30 APRIL 1962

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1 Jan 62 Phoumi Nosavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG), informed US Ambassador Winthrop Brown that he was still considering what reply, if any, to send to Prince Souvanna Phouma. Souvanna, the leader of a "neutralist" faction, had been given a mandate by King Savang to form a government of national union, and, in recent negotiations with the RLG and the pro-Communist Pathet Lao headed by Prince Souphanouvong, had proposed that, in such a government, the key Ministries of Defense and Interior be allotted to Souvanna's neutralist faction rather than to right or left wing groups of Phoumi and Souphanouvong (see item 27-30 December 1961). Souvanna had allowed Phoumi time to consider this, but the Prince had said that he and Souphanouvong would return to Vientiane for further negotiations only if Phoumi gave an affirmative reply.

On 31 December, Ambassador Brown had informed Phoumi that the US Government, in a reversal of its previous policy, now supported Souvanna's proposal with regard to the two ministries (see item). Reviewing this stand for Phoumi on 1 January, the Ambassador said that neither of the two strong opposing forces in Laos would ever agree to a government in which the other controlled the two key cabinet positions of Defense and Interior. Hence the only way to achieve a government of national union was to allot the disputed posts to the center faction.

Ambassador Brown pointed out to Phoumi that not to reply would be to break off negotiations with Souvanna. Phoumi must realize, therefore, that his decision would be "a very crucial one as regards US relations with him and Boun Oum [Premier of the RLG and titular head of the right wing faction] as well as regards Souvanna." Phoumi denied that the RLG had any desire to break off negotiations, and he refused to agree that a failure to reply to Souvanna could properly be so interpreted. Nor did he accept the reasoning behind the US conclusion that Defense and Interior must be conceded to the center faction. Phoumi said he had already made concessions in allowing Souvanna--a weak man and clearly not a true neutral since he had Soviet support--to seek to form a government. As for the effect of his decision on relations with the United States, Phoumi said he felt the US was already beginning to withdraw its support. According to Brown, "He said that he thought the US was continuing to retreat and that our whole policy had changed a great deal since January 1961."

In reporting this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown said he was convinced that "Phoumi now clearly understands that if decision he makes tonight is adverse it will not only mean rupture with Souvanna but loss of US support to him and Boun Oum . . . . The strong probability is that the answer will be unfavorable." This, said Brown in a subsequent message to Secretary Rusk and Assistant Secretary Harriman, would be a "direct refusal to follow our advice on a cardinal point of policy . . . . If we are ever to convince him [Phoumi] that we will not support him whatever he does we must therefore act."

The first step, continued Brown, seemed clear. He would request an immediate audience with the King and explain to him that a government of national union could only be attained if Defense and Interior were allotted to the center, that the US believed that the refusal of Boun Oum and Phoumi to send any message to Souvanna on this point rendered further negotiation impossible, that the US could not be expected to continue support of a government whose policies it disapproved, and that the US Government hoped His Majesty would exercise his influence so that US aid to Laos could be continued, either by changing the current decision of the Laotian Government or by a change in that Government.

Subsequent steps, continued Brown, were more difficult to choose. The problem was to "take some action that will be visible, have immediate effect and convince Phoumi viscerally as well as intellectually that he really risks having US aid to Laos cut off, but at the same time to avoid unnecessary harm to Laos," such as a dangerous impairment of the capabilities of the RLG's Army (the Forces Armees du Royaume, or FAR).

A public statement by Brown or the Department of State to the effect that the RLG was unreasonable in its position on the Defense and Interior Ministries, or a visit by Brown to Souvanna and Souphanouvong at Khang Khay, would dramatize US willingness to part company with Phoumi and Boun Oum. The "real sanction," however, would be "cutting aid and military aid is . . . nearest Phoumi's heart." Any drastic step, such as letting it be known that aid would be entirely stopped, might drive Phoumi into a desperate military action in the hope that retaliation by the Pathet Lao would force the US to come to his support. Brown did not wish to call in the MAAG teams from the field because of the demoralizing effect on the troops and because it would cut the US off from knowledge of what was going on. The course Brown recommended was suspension of deliveries of military supplies into the country. In addition, he could tell certain ministers and other key personalities, without being more specific, that the US would not support the RLG position on the Defense and Interior Ministries.

Brown cautioned that these modest sanctions might be insufficient. The US should be prepared "to go all the way if necessary, realizing the cost to the FAR and ultimately to the Lao people if we drastically cut their military and economic aid." The US should not, however, expect quick results from the application of sanctions. A possible face-saving device for Boun Oum, if he wished to yield, would be a call by the Co-Chairmen of the 14-Nation Geneva Conference on Laos for another meeting of the three Princes in Geneva. Brown, however, was not optimistic.

"The hard fact is," he concluded, "that the sanctions we have available to us are somewhat like the atom bomb--too big to use without causing us almost as much harm as those to whom they are applied."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 919, 920, 1 Jan 62.

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1 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown received word through the Chairman of the International Control Commission for Laos (ICC) that Souvanna planned to depart for Paris the following day, since he was certain that no satisfactory reply was to be expected from Phoumi and Boun Oum. Souvanna said he would be gone "for a week, a month, or even a year." Brown reported that French Ambassador Falaize was sending a message to Souvanna urging him to remain in Laos until 4 January, stressing the need for time to allow Western diplomatic pressures to work on the RLG and the fact that immediate departure would "play into Phoumi's hands." The Falaize message would include a statement that the US and British Ambassadors, as well as the ICC, concurred in the suggestion.

(Souvanna, nevertheless, departed for Paris on 2 January.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 918, 1 Jan 62; 934, 3 Jan 62.

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Jan 62

The 14-Nation Conference on Laos reconvened in Geneva, having been in semi-recess during the Christmas holidays. The US delegation observed that the atmosphere of the Conference was far from favorable in view of the failure of the recent meeting of the three Princes at Vientiane. This failure was ascribed by the non-Communist Conference delegations to the obstructionism of Boun Oum and Phoumi, while the Communist representatives went beyond this by asserting that such tactics had been actively sponsored by the United States.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1007, 6 Jan 62.

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Small-scale skirmishes between FAR and anti-government forces took place in the vicinity of Muong Sai, Tha Thom, Mahaxay, and Ban Hin Lap as FAR forces moved into better positions for initiating offensive attacks, if ordered. On 3 January CINCPAC reported to the JCS that there was no indication, however, of hostilities being resumed in the immediate future.

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 030210Z Jan 62, and 030422Z Jan 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 1-62, 4 Jan 62, JMF 9150/9108 (62).

2 Jan 62

In a memorandum for its own use, the Far East Region, OSD (ISA), summarized [redacted] estimate of FAR capabilities and [redacted] proposals for US policy. [redacted] estimate of FAR capabilities was substantially similar to that put forward by CHMAAG Laos (see item 20 December 1961), except [redacted] gave particular attention to the area [redacted] capabilities for irregular warfare. [redacted] the numbers and locations of tribesmen in every area of Laos, men thus far unarmed but evidently willing to fight if given weapons.

[redacted] It would be "politically impossible" at present for the US to begin the large-scale and continuous arming of minority peoples in Laos. However, [redacted] an inconspicuous and gradual arming

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of tribesmen--expanding from already friendly villages to adjoining areas, making these areas "safe" and expanding again--would be feasible, difficult for friend or enemy to detect, and politically defensible inasmuch as the enemy was also arming and training villagers. In this manner, [redacted] tribesmen responsive to the US could largely take over Sam Neua province in three to six months and could begin to infiltrate the DRV. [redacted] an accelerated program to build helicopter strips and airfields capable of handling CARIBOU aircraft (an experimental two-engine STOL transport under development for the US Army) would give the Meo and other tribesmen a greater mobility and a consequent opportunity to use new and more effective tactics in their operations.

In view of the improved FAR capabilities and of the latent possibilities of increased irregular activity by friendly tribesmen, [redacted] recommended that the US:

1. Abandon its willingness to see the RLG accept a coalition government on terms which, in the "honest judgment" of both the RLG and the US, would probably mean the subsequent communization of Laos. The US should not, [redacted] contemplate any "drastic action," such as terminating aid to the RLG or announcing that Souvanna was the only possible Prime Minister for Laos. Rather, the US should support the RLG in insisting upon strong cabinet posts and strong numerical representation in the coalition government.
2. Recognize that prolonged negotiations would permit the RLG to improve its military situation; refuse, consequently, to allow a time limit to be placed upon negotiations, and insist instead upon the wisdom of allowing the opposing Lao factions to "proceed at their own pace and find their own levels."
3. Authorize the arming of Lao civilians who desired weapons for self-defense.
4. Authorize the "immediate" arming of 3000 to 4000 Meo in Xieng Khouang province, the "gradual" arming of additional Meo in Sam Neua province, and the "discreet" arming of Meo near Muong Sai and Yao tribesmen near Muong Sing.
5. Stop treating the RLG as a "caretaker government." Discussions should be inaugurated on economic aid and civil police programs; any programs agreed to should be implemented, whatever the status of negotiations at the time.
6. Be prepared to accept the continuation for one to two years of a "low-key struggle" for control of Laos, realizing that although "stalemate" would be the most favorable result to be expected from such a struggle, this stalemate would be on better geographical, military, and political terms than could presently be had.

During this period, [REDACTED] MAAG would attempt to maintain the current "favorable momentum" in Laos. They would continue training the FAR and irregulars, build and enlarge airfields and helicopter strips and provide additional helicopters and light transport aircraft, provide the FAR with more and better equipment, continue to urge Phoumi to replace incompetent leaders, and begin to "marry" the FAR with the irregular forces. They would also prepare, by planning, training, and stockpiling, to carry out military or paramilitary portions of the suggested policy.

(S) "Proposal for Support of Additional Resistance Forces in Laos," w/apps, 2 Jan 62; OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

2 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos commented to CINCPAC upon Ambassador Brown's proposed sanctions against the RLG (see item 1 January 1962). The suspension of deliveries of military supplies would not have much effect for 30 days, CHMAAG reported. Only motor gasoline (MOGAS) was in shorter than 30 days' supply. Ordnance and ammunition shortages would not be felt for 45 days, and the FAR could conduct its training and air transport operations at reduced levels with existing supplies for 30 and 60 days, respectively. The suspension of deliveries itself could be accomplished without great difficulty, since the US could control the traffic from its storage areas in Thailand.

The suspension of financial support to the FAR would have little impact for the first 39 days. Phoumi could undoubtedly then obtain a loan from the National Bank in Laos and delay insolvency in military finances another month. During the time that financial support was halted, CHMAAG presumed that the US would continue supporting ECCOIL [Filipino technicians] and providing Air America support for the FAR. He also foresaw that MAAG would probably assume the financial support of Thai volunteers.

Regarding the recall of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) from the field, CHMAAG agreed with Ambassador Brown that this sanction should be employed only in case of absolute necessity. He pointed out that the FAR would be seriously demoralized by such an unmistakable sign of the withdrawal of US support, and this sanction would damage, possibly irreparably, the present excellent relations between the MAAG field elements and FAR commanders. CHMAAG also thought that it should be recognized that the MTTs should preferably be withdrawn entirely from Laos immediately after their withdrawal from the field. In this way, possible frictions between them and the FAR would be avoided, and the MAAG would be spared the effort of supporting them.

It was CHMAAG's opinion that the suspension of military deliveries and the suspension of financial support would both exert considerable pressure upon the RLG. Both sanctions would, moreover, leave open the possibility of resuming an effective US military aid program; the sanction of withdrawing MTTs, however, would probably not leave this possibility open.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 189103,  
2 Jan 62.

2 Jan 62 Premier Boun Oum informed Ambassador Brown that the RLG would make no reply to Souvanna regarding his proposal (see item 1 January 1962) that the Defense and Interior Ministries in a government of national union be allocated to Souvanna's center faction. Brown then informed the Secretary of State that he had asked for an immediate audience with the King. He urgently requested instructions on whether or not to begin withholding military deliveries to the RLG, as he had recommended the previous day (see item 1 January 1962). The Department of State replied immediately that the sanctions should not be initiated, noting that Souvanna's departure for Paris earlier that day provided "a few days to take stock."

In his message Ambassador Brown had said that he did not think a resumption of hostilities was likely in the immediate future, but to be prepared he asked for confirmation of his understanding of the US policy for various contingencies (see item 14 December 1961). The State Department reply of 4 January authorized the Ambassador, at his discretion, to inform Phoumi that if he attacked or unilaterally withdrew to the South the US would withdraw its MAAG advisers, air support, and supplies. Brown was authorized to implement these measures to the extent considered necessary in the light of the "tactical political and military situation" at the time. If the enemy clearly initiated the hostilities, however, the US would continue its support of the FAR. The Department assumed that MAAG was currently taking precautions to prevent any FAR operations that could be provocative to the other side.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 924, 2 Jan 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 583, 2 Jan 62; 589, 4 Jan 62.

2 Jan 62 A Radio Thailand broadcast rebuked the "many Western countries" that were advocating the speedy formation of a Lao coalition government--a government that, far from bringing strength to the fight against the Communists, would prepare the way for the Communist subjugation of Laos. The broadcast also cited unfavorably a "certain Western statesman" (probably Harriman, Ambassador Young reported), who had said that SEATO was willing to release a neutral Laos from its protection, and then scoffed that so far there had been no evidence of any SEATO protection. If SEATO had acted in Laos, it was charged, the Communists would not now be in control of half the country, with a military base in the Plaine des Jarres.

Ambassador Young commented that this broadcast was open evidence of the frustration felt in Thailand regarding Western efforts to establish a coalition government under Souvanna. He described the Thai as caught between the desire to maintain close alignment with the US and the firm belief that US policy in Laos was naive, dangerous, and bound to end in facilitating a Communist take-over "right up to the Thai border."

Young said that until recently the Embassy had been "fairly certain" that Thai officials were not trying to influence Phoumi to ignore US advice. "Now we [are] not so sure although we have no new evidence one way or the other." To Young the radio commentary indicated a Thai disposition toward closer identification with Phoumi's cause regardless of Western policy. If the US decided to apply the sanctions against Phoumi recently recommended by Ambassador Brown (see item 1 January 1962), Young anticipated great difficulty in convincing Thai officials that such action was in their best interests.

Replying on 4 January, the Secretary of State told Ambassador Young that the Thai broadcast had engendered serious concern in Washington. Although the US did not expect active Thai support on all issues, "we cannot countenance overt or covert steps by the RTG deliberately to sabotage our efforts at peaceful and acceptable settlement." Such actions could complicate the negotiations in Geneva, the Secretary continued, making it difficult if not impossible to place the blame on the Communists and/or Souvanna if negotiations should fail. He urged the Ambassador to make these views known to the Thai Government (see item 6 January 1962).

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 4 Jan 62; SecState to Bangkok, 941, 4 Jan 62.

3 Jan 62 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC endorsed Ambassador Brown's observation (see item 1 January 1962) that sanctions against the RLG would harm the US almost as much as the RLG. According to CINCPAC, the "drastic step" of suspending military aid to the RLG would amount to a reversal of the US policy of strengthening the FAR in order to bolster the RLG's negotiating position. Such a sanction could dim further the US hopes for a neutralist government; it could even encourage the Kong Le/Pathet Lao faction, which was still receiving supplies from the Communist Bloc and improving its military position, to launch a military offensive.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 030422Z Jan 62.

3 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, in an audience with King Savang, explained the US policy of supporting Souvanna's proposal for a government of national union with the Defense and Interior Ministries controlled by Souvanna's neutralist faction. Brown had informed Phoumi of this US position, making clear that the US could not support him in his opposition to the Souvanna proposal. Phoumi, however, evidently did not believe it.

The King replied that Phoumi did believe it and considered that US aid, by a decision of the whole US Government, had been terminated as of the previous day.

When Brown asked what should be the next step, the King replied he had nothing to say, that the RLG did not amount to anything without US support and in effect was committing suicide not only for itself but for Laos.

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The Lao, however, could not give up their principles or betray their souls. They must therefore resign themselves.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 931, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 Upon returning to Geneva, Soviet Ambassador Pushkin proposed to the other Co-Chairman, MacDonald, that they invite the three Princes to come to Geneva. Sullivan, Deputy Head of the US Mission, urged MacDonald to delay in the matter, but at the same time he pointed out to the State Department that the US use of delaying tactics should not go so far as to appear to "shelter Boun Oum in his obstinacy." He therefore stated that, unless otherwise instructed, he would support issuance of the invitations, which MacDonald had succeeded in having postponed until 5 January. Sullivan considered the Soviet draft invitation to be quite moderate and therefore acceptable with certain minor changes.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 994, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 Secretary of State Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that, according to the US delegation at the Geneva Conference, an invitation from the Conference Co-Chairmen would soon be issued to the three Princes to meet in Geneva. Rusk requested Brown to use all possible pressures on Boun Oum and Phoumi to get them to accept.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 585, 3 Jan 62.

- 3 Jan 62 It was agreed by Co-Chairman MacDonald and by the US delegation that the stalemate at the Vientiane talks and the suspicions felt among the Communist delegations regarding alleged US and Thai support for the negative attitude of the RLG made it inadvisable to negotiate at Geneva on the delicate questions of Lao relations with SEATO and the disposition of the private armies. The US delegation therefore reported that "no attempts will be initiated [at] Geneva" toward an agreement on these issues.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 993, 3 Jan 62.

- 4 Jan 62 Upon arriving at Paris, Souvanna answered questions from reporters. His replies indicated that, though he had come to Paris ostensibly for a rest, he would not discount the possibility of going to Geneva if such a journey would help resolve the Lao crisis. When asked about the "duality of US policy," he expressed confidence that the US, in spite of charges to the contrary by elements of the French press, did desire a neutral Laos. Souvanna added, however, that continued US pressure on the RLG would be necessary.

Souvanna also denied that his followers and those of Souphanouvong were united. In response to a question about Russian arms, he admitted that he received such weapons and said he distributed them as he saw fit. This last answer distressed the French Foreign Office, which feared that the statement might be quoted out of context and therefore was considering the issuance of a clarification of Souvanna's remark.

A UK Embassy officer speaking on behalf of France as well as Britain, in a brief private conversation with Souvanna, sounded him out on the possibility of a meeting of the three Princes at Geneva. Souvanna seemed receptive

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but indicated that the Conference should, for the present, only agree in principle to invite the Princes, withholding the actual invitation for several days to see if there was some favorable development. He undertook to instruct his representative, Quinim, to urge acceptance of this plan by the Conference (see item 6 January 1962). US Ambassador Gavin believed that the Anglo-French approach had been designed to anticipate Pushkin's "making a grandstand play" by calling for a meeting of the Princes at Geneva.

While waiting for the plane carrying the Prince, Quinim had "wondered aloud" to an officer of the British Embassy whether Souvanna entertained hopes of getting the Conference Co-Chairmen to visit Laos and add to the existing pressure for negotiations.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3315, 4 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown replied to Secretary Rusk (see item 3 January 1962) that he had "no pressures left to use on Phoumi and Boun Oum." He had made "all the threats that words alone can convey. Though my words have been general, they have been interpreted as saying aid would be cut off." These threats had been "categorically defied." What was needed now, continued Brown, was "action repeat action." He therefore renewed his recommendation (see item 1 January 1962) that military shipments be stopped. If this step was not taken, pressures on Phoumi and Boun Oum to go to Geneva should be left to representatives of the Co-Chairmen.

Later in the day, the Secretary of State replied to Ambassador Brown that the expected invitation from the Co-Chairmen created a new situation that made it desirable to hold back on further sanctions for the present. A break with Phoumi and Boun Oum, if it became necessary, should be on the issue of their willingness to go to Geneva and carry on negotiations rather than solely on the question of two specific cabinet posts.

High level discussions in Washington were planned, continued the Secretary, and specific instructions would then be issued to Brown. For use in these discussions, the Secretary requested Brown's opinion on the following:

1. Could sanctions be made so painful to other Lao that they would either force Phoumi to resign or appeal to the King to remove him?
2. Could these objectives be achieved merely by suspension of military deliveries and financial support?
3. If Phoumi were forced out, would other Lao, willing to negotiate realistically for a coalition government, be available to take over?
4. How would the Army react if it became apparent the US would no longer support it with Phoumi in charge?
5. How many forces would follow Phoumi if he went South?

6. Would the FAR command structure become totally disrupted by Phoumi's departure?

7. What commitments should the US try to get from Souvanna, with whom it would be necessary to come to some understanding in advance in the event it became necessary to break with Phoumi? (See item 6 January 1962 for Brown's reply.)

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that consideration was being given to the possibility of obtaining Soviet agreement to restrain the Pathet Lao if, in the interest of producing a negotiated settlement, the US was forced to apply strong military sanctions against the RLG.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 937, 4 Jan 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 588, 4 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62

French Ambassador to the US Herve Alphand was, at his own request, briefed by Harriman on various aspects of the situation in Southeast Asia. Concerning Laos, Harriman reviewed the status of negotiations and said that the US was trying to persuade Boun Oum to go to Geneva for a meeting of the Princes. Alphand agreed to Harriman's proposal that the Ambassador suggest that the Government of France contact Souvanna and encourage the Prince to pursue his efforts to form a coalition. When the French Ambassador expressed satisfaction with tripartite cooperation at the Geneva Conference, Harriman indicated that "quiet" cooperation between France and the US would also be desirable in the event Souvanna succeeded in forming a government.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3729, 5 Jan 62.

4 Jan 62

The ICC report for the period 15-31 December 1961 became available to the US delegation at Geneva. The report largely consisted of a chronological record of events in Laos, including descriptions of the meetings and conflicting demands advanced by the three Princes, the various violations of the cease-fire alleged by the three sides, and the actual fighting of which the ICC had knowledge. The ICC expressed concern that a more serious breakdown of the cease-fire might occur if a coalition government were not soon formed, and it therefore urged that the three Princes be invited to meet in Geneva should all else fail.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 996, 4 Jan 62;  
CONFE 1007, 6 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62

The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented their views on "Reassessment of US Policy in Laos" in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff described the US material and technical assistance being given Laos as "designed to maintain or strengthen the military and bargaining position of the Royal Lao Government, until such time as an acceptable agreement on a neutral Laos is achieved." Meanwhile, in the realm of political-diplomatic action the United States was restraining the RLG from military counteractions and applying pressure to its leaders to make concessions to Souvanna. The JCS thought these



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restraints and pressures, though well-intended, were having the effect of undermining the prestige, determination, and effectiveness of the RLG and its armed forces, to a point where "the legal government may soon have no tenable position from which to negotiate." In short, the US political-diplomatic efforts and military assistance efforts in Laos were at cross-purposes in some respects.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned over the appearance that, in pursuing the objective of establishing a coalition government under Souvanna, US policy would make whatever concessions were necessary to obtain the "best possible" negotiated settlement. Meanwhile, they pointed out, there was no evidence that the Communists had abandoned their goal of dominating Laos. Indeed, there was considerable evidence that they had taken deliberate advantage of the cease-fire and the Geneva negotiations to intensify military operations against South Viet Nam and infiltration of Thailand and Cambodia. To the JCS the Communist tactic appeared to be to continue to negotiate over Laos until South Viet Nam had fallen and until the pro-Western elements in Laos had become so demoralized and ineffective as to pose no significant obstacle to a Communist take-over in Laos after a coalition government was formed.

The JCS believed that the military position of the RLG was not such as to make it necessary to seek a peaceful settlement at all costs. The RLG was now stronger vis-a-vis the Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces than at the beginning of the cease-fire. It could and should negotiate from a position of strength. The FAR was increasingly competent; the peoples, both Lao and minority tribesmen, were evidently willing, if armed, to organize local defense forces against the Communists; and because of superior air and rail equipment and facilities, the RLG could take better advantage of the coming rainy season than the enemy.

In these circumstances there was an opportunity for the United States to "exploit the shifting power balance in a manner to strengthen the negotiating position of the RLG while simultaneously weakening that of the Souvanna Phouma-Souphanouvong group." Not to take up this opportunity would be to neglect "an effective alternative means of executing the existing policy of achieving a neutral and independent Laos." The JCS believed that "the interests and prestige of the United States require that the Departments of State, Defense, and other agencies involved, combine their resources in a common effort to utilize those assets available to the United States and to maintain the prestige, popular support, determination, and military effectiveness of the Royal Lao Government."

"Specifically, the United States should not attempt to persuade the representatives of the Royal Lao Government at current or future negotiations to make concessions merely for the sake of agreement." To cut off US aid to the RLG as a means of pressure would be self-defeating, particularly since there was no evidence that comparable pressure was being applied from any source to Souvanna



and Souphanouvong. "To remove MAAG groups from Laos would set up an irreversible chain of events which would be disastrous to US interests and prestige."

The prime example of the type of concession the JCS believed the United States should not pressure the RLG leaders to make "merely for the sake of agreement" was the yielding of the Defense and Interior Ministries to the neutralist faction. "The retention of these two key ministries by the present RLG in any Government headed by Souvanna Phouma has great importance for the preservation of the hard-won and very considerable American military assets in Laos. A so-called neutral Defense Minister would almost certainly bar Western-oriented Laotian officers from positions of high command." Further, a diversion of US-supplied equipment from the FAR to the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces would be likely. Fully aware of these dangers, the RLG leaders were determined to stand fast in claiming Defense and Interior, but, "notwithstanding the apparent community of interest of the two nations, the United States is exerting strong pressure on the RLG to yield on this point." The JCS observed that occasional restraint of the RLG was undoubtedly required, "but encouragement and full assurance of continued US support are equally necessary to the attainment of US objectives in Laos."

[On 12 January the Deputy Secretary of Defense forwarded this JCS memorandum to the President and to the Secretary of State. In his covering memorandum to the President, the Deputy Secretary withheld endorsement of the portions dealing primarily with political matters, but he directed attention to the fact that the JCS assessment of the military situation--that RLG capabilities were better relatively than at the time of the cease-fire--had just been confirmed by SNIE 58-62 (see item 11 January 1962). His own conclusion from the SNIE was the "we can take advantage of time effectively to further improve the situation of the RLG forces" and that there was reasonable certainty that the RLG forces could retain control of the major areas they currently held, so long as the enemy received no additional reinforcements from North Viet Nam.]

(TS) JCSM-12-62 to SecDef, "Reassessment of US Policy in Laos (C)," 5 Jan 62; derived from (TS) JCS 2344/28, 29 Dec 61; (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/28, 16 Jan 62. All in JMF 9155.2/3100 (29 Dec 61).

5 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown, with the authorization of the Secretary of State, informed the Laotian Finance Minister that the US was withholding the \$3,000,000 January cash grant payment for all forms of aid. The US, said Brown, was "very disappointed at events of the last few days, at some positions taken by Phoumi and Boun Oum and at the fact that no message had been sent to Souvanna on January 1." As a consequence, the US was re-examining its entire economic, financial, and military aid program for Laos. Events of the next few days would influence the final decisions of the US. An invitation was coming from the Co-Chairmen to the three Princes to resume their discussions in Geneva. The reaction of the RLG to this invitation would be an important factor in the final decisions of the US.

The RLG reacted to the withholding of the January payment with a suspension by the National Bank of dollar and franc sales. Commercial banks quickly followed suit. The immediate effect was a rise in private kip-dollar exchange rates from the official 80 to 1 to anywhere from 85 to 150 to 1. Gold prices rose 25 per cent; food prices rose 10 to 25 per cent.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 943, 5 Jan 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 590, 4 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62

In Paris, Ambassador Gavin called upon Souvanna to convey his respects and to wish the Prince well in the endeavor to establish a free, neutral, and stable Laos. Souvanna responded to these sentiments with a recital of complaints about the "negative behavior" of Boun Oum and Phoumi during his recent stay in Laos. Since he had received no satisfactory reply from Boun Oum to his suggestions for negotiations, Souvanna had decided to journey to Paris to await developments.

In reply to Gavin's comment that the Co-Chairmen appeared to be planning to invite the Princes to Geneva, Souvanna said that, although the idea was good, the invitations should not be issued for several days. By intervening too bluntly in the kingdom's internal affairs, the Co-Chairmen might "wound Lao sensibilities." Instead, the Conference should allow a short time for "diplomatic activity" and for exchanges among the factions before calling a meeting of the Princes.

Souvanna then informed the Ambassador that he had told Consul General Holt at Zurich that the US should stop its aid to the RLG and, most important, should continue to pay the soldiers. To halt the pay of these men would, Souvanna believed, raise the possibility of a mutiny at this most critical moment. The US, however, should exert pressure by withdrawing all logistical support, transportation, and military advisory teams. In addition, pressure would have to be applied against South Viet Nam and Thailand to prevent them from aiding the Boun Oum regime. Souvanna believed that the RLG's decision to suspend the sale of both dollars and francs (see earlier item, 5 January 1962) indicated that Phoumi had taken seriously the American threats of sanctions.

Souvanna next turned to the question of Communist aid to his own faction. He declared that, although he had accepted help offered by Communist China, North Viet Nam, and the USSR, he did not intend that Laos become a Communist state. He believed that the Communist Bloc was sincere in its statements that a neutral government be established in Laos.

Although admittedly aware that Viet Minh forces were crossing southern Laos to enter South Viet Nam, Souvanna observed that he did not control the area in question. If, however, his government were established over the entire kingdom, he could, as he had intimated to Harriman, seal this invasion corridor (see item 15-17 September 1961). For the present, the problem was not

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southern Laos but the establishment, by means of the Geneva Agreements and with the consent of the Lao people, of a government headed by Souvanna.

Ambassador Gavin commented that the conversation had been amicable throughout. The Prince expressed his appreciation for Gavin's visit but did not mention the oft-repeated invitation that he visit Washington. Souvanna also remained silent about Prince Souphanouvong and did not inquire in detail about any US plans or decisions to withdraw aid from Phoumi.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3333, 5 Jan 62.

5 Jan 62 The JCS, adopting a CINCPAC recommendation of 15 December 1961, augmented the Joint Table of Distribution of MAAG Laos by 73 Army spaces, to a total authorization of 349 (317 Army; 4 Navy; 28 Air Force). The additional personnel were intended to carry out increased MAAG responsibilities for communications, within Laos and between Laos and Thailand.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 152046Z Dec 61; (C) Msg, JCS to CSA and CINCPAC, JCS 2806, 5 Jan 62; both in JMF 1040.1 (14 Apr 61).

5 Jan 62 The 38th plenary session of the Geneva Conference (first session of the reconvened Conference) met with Pushkin as Acting Chairman. He began by stating that continued disagreement among the Princes seriously endangered the cease-fire agreement, and then indicated anew where Soviet sympathies lay by reading the 1 January letter to the Co-Chairmen from Souvanna and Souphanouvong attacking Boun Oum for allegedly having refused to negotiate at Vientiane. Pushkin then presented the message drafted by the Co-Chairmen, inviting the three Princes to come to Geneva at once, mildly rebuking them for the obstructions that a Laotian settlement had continually faced, and stating that the new meeting could provide an opportunity for negotiations toward the formation of a government of national union. The invitation was approved by the Conference without comment.

Speeches from the heads of the Indian and the UK delegations followed, appealing for moderation and restraint by all, in the hope that a settlement could be reached, but delegates from North Viet Nam, the Pathet Lao, and the Chinese Communists all replied with vigorous attacks against the RLG and, above all, the US, which was castigated for purported "double-dealing," "insincerity," and "obstruction" of attempts to reach Laotian settlement.

Pushkin and the Polish delegate, Balicki, also spoke. They focused their accusations almost entirely on the RLG, limiting their remarks about the US to a few allusions to the secret support that "certain circles" were purportedly giving to Phoumi and Boun Oum.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1001, 5 Jan 62; (OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1009, 7 Jan 62; (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE A-21, 11 Jan 62.

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5 Jan 62 Referring to reports from CHMAAG Laos at the end of December 1961 (see items 20 and 22 December 1961) and to the recent situation as reported in his own messages to JCS of 3 January (see item 1-4 January 1962), CINCPAC urged that the US take advantage of the shift in the balance of power in favor of the RLG. This shift, according to CINCPAC, could be exploited to a considerable degree so as to improve the RLG negotiating position.

The favorable factors included: 1) Improved FAR combat capability indicated by increased competence in weapons, tactics and leadership. The antigovernment forces, CINCPAC reported, could not now capture any major city on the Mekong River from Paksane northward without overt and considerably reinforced North Viet Nam participation. 2) Evident willingness of tribal minorities to organize local defense, and the demonstrated capability of larger tribes, particularly the Meo, to maintain damaging guerrilla warfare operations against the enemy. 3) Meo capability to expand their resistance into northern and western Laos. 4) New tactics, which required only the enlargement of airfields in Meo country and the availability of suitable aircraft, of rapid deployment of FAR regulars to reinforce Meo harassment capability. In addition, CINCPAC believed that the RLG could exploit the rainy season beginning in mid-April better than the enemy could, because of a larger and more flexible airlift and generally better transport facilities.

CINCPAC suggested that by failing to exploit the shifting balance of power the United States would be neglecting an effective alternative means of executing the existing policy of achieving a neutral and independent Laos.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050218Z Jan 62.

5 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the "Special Group," the Southeast Asia Branch, Far East Region, OSD (ISA), suggested a new course of action in US attempts to persuade Phoumi to accept allocation of the portfolios of Defense and Interior to the Souvanna neutrals. The Southeast Asia Branch recounted that the Department of State had already requested [redacted] attempt to persuade Phoumi either to 1) go to Geneva and accept the Souvanna plan for a 19-member cabinet with Phoumi as Minister of Public Works, or 2) withdraw from the RLG in favor of someone who would accept Souvanna's offer; [redacted]

To the Southeast Asia Branch, there appeared to be two possible ways to achieve one of these three results: bribe or coup d'etat. Phoumi might be bribed into resigning or acquiescing in the Western position; but a "simple bribe" would probably not be effective since Phoumi appeared more interested in power than in money. The Southeast Asia Branch therefore suggested an offer of funds that would be related to the acquisition and maintenance of power. The ISA office recommended that Phoumi be approached [redacted] and told once again the firm intention of the US to go forward with sanctions

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if the RLG did not cooperate in Western policies.

With this money Phoumi could "take care of" his loyal supporters in the FAR, fight Communism through community development schemes, and maintain his own political position. If Phoumi did not accept this offer, the Southeast Asia Branch then postulated, he might be so disturbed by it and other pressures upon him that he would consider resigning his office. The US should be quick to perceive such a trend in Phoumi's thought and be ready at the opportune moment to offer him funds again--"substantial funds" in retirement to "take care of" his loyal followers. (See items 6 and 7 March 1962.)

The Southeast Asia Branch acknowledged that staging a coup d'etat would not be impossible, but recommended that such a course of action not be considered at the present time. According to the Branch, a successful coup would take too long in preparation to achieve the State Department objective of early negotiations. Moreover, even a successful coup would risk the fragmentation of FAR loyalties and a consequent serious weakening of the military position of the RLG. As a result, the West's bargaining position might be weakened to a point where "the present reasonably favorable situation would no longer obtain."

(S) (Eyes Only) Memo for the Special Group [from FER/SEA Br., OSD (ISA)], 5 Jan 62; OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

5 Jan 62     Reviewing the deadlock in Laotian negotiations and examining all possible courses for a way out, Ambassador Brown recommended that "at least some consideration should be given" to an arrangement with Phoumi as Minister of Defense, assigning Interior to the Pathet Lao. Brown recognized the dangers and disadvantages of this but wondered if the result might not be more favorable than what might be expected from the current US policy. If the United States continued its attempt to induce Phoumi to concede Defense and Interior to the center faction to the point of applying military sanctions against him, the result might be to leave the right wing in Laos leaderless and ineffective and the Army crippled.

Assistant Secretary Harriman replied two days later, saying he felt that measures might still be found to make Phoumi more amenable to the Souvanna solution without bringing on the collapse of the right wing that concerned the Ambassador. At the moment a way was being sought to let Phoumi know the United States still considered him a friend, with an important role to play in an independent Laos, and that unwillingness to support him claim to Defense and Interior did not mean that the United States was abandoning him entirely. After considering Brown's suggestion, Harriman continued to believe the effect of allotting Defense to Phoumi and Interior to the Pathet Lao "would ultimately be disastrous." In any event, he

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was certain that Souvanna would not accept the Pathet Lao in so sensitive a post as Interior. "If he did, it would be clear tip-off that he is prepared to lose [the] country to communists so that whole Souvanna solution would become unacceptable to us."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 942, 5 Jan 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 600, 7 Jan 62.

6 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, with the aid of the Country Team, replied to Secretary Rusk's questions of 4 January (see item) as follows:

1. It was highly doubtful that making sanctions painful to other Lao would result in their forcing Phoumi out of office. The original revolutionary committee (see item 18 August 1960) would probably remain loyal to Phoumi at least to the extent that they would not go over to Souvanna or join a group prepared to negotiate with him. Other Lao were discouraged from differing with Phoumi because he controlled the instruments of power, such as the Army, the police, and the security services of Colonel Siho. The so-called "Vientiane neutrals" had no clear rallying point.

2. Suspension of deliveries of military supplies and financial assistance over a long period would eventually bring Phoumi down; the time required would depend upon Phoumi's determination and the amount of support he received from Sarit. More severe measures such as withdrawing MAAG advisors would accelerate the process but at a cost that was "obvious." Either to apply these measures for a long period or to go beyond them would seriously damage the FAR and the Lao economy.

3. The King could not be counted on as a replacement for Phoumi; the Ambassador could think of no other likely volunteer. The burden of further negotiation for the right wing would probably fall on the US.

4. Most of the Army would remain loyal to Phoumi because most southern Lao would stick with him, and the Army had been recruited mostly in the South. Continued direct US support of Vang Pao would provide a measure of influence on Meo operations.

5. Many Southerners in the Army would follow Phoumi South; it was impossible to predict what others would do. "The reaction of the other side would also have a bearing on the attitude of the FAR."

6. In the opinion of Chief MAAG, the departure of Phoumi would have a disastrous effect on the FAR command structure.

7. With regard to what commitments the United States should seek in advance from Souvanna, Ambassador Brown thought Souvanna should pledge to include in his government the most capable rightists available and that he should be required to give "satisfactory undertakings" on reprisals, elections, private armies, the corridor to South Viet Nam, the ICC, the release of US prisoners



held by the Pathet Lao, and so forth. The Ambassador observed, however, that the drastic actions necessary to topple Phoumi would frustrate one standing US objective, namely, the inclusion in the coalition government of an effective rightist group with a strong leader. Implying that Souvanna might be unable to maintain an independent course as head of an unbalanced coalition, Brown suggested that any commitments made by Souvanna in advance might be of doubtful dependability.

Ambassador Brown raised a question regarding the Secretary of State's proposal to attempt to obtain Soviet agreement to "hold back PL" in the event the United States was forced to apply strong military sanctions against the RLG. Was this sufficient? "If we are to suspend military supplies should we not ask Russians to stop their airlift for instance? We ought to exact a high price from them for our abandonment [of] Phoumi."

On the same day, CINCPAC supplied comments to the JCS on the State Department questions. CINCPAC, too, felt that Phoumi probably could not be forced from office by "sanctions painful to other Lao," that even in the face of these sanctions the original revolutionary committee would probably remain loyal to Phoumi, and that a substantial portion of the Army would follow Phoumi South. CINCPAC noted that Phoumi had established a complex of military installations around Savannakhet and had deployed six of his nine GM in this southern region. If Phoumi went South, CINCPAC concluded, he probably "would not leave much command structure behind him."

Like Brown, CINCPAC saw reason to doubt that Souvanna could fully live up to any commitments he made in advance. To CINCPAC the minimum acceptable commitments appeared to be pledges by Souvanna 1) to exclude the Pathet Lao from cabinet and sub-cabinet positions in the Defense and Interior Ministries, and 2) to keep a police or other paramilitary security force separate from the Defense Ministry, so that it would be "unaffected by Geneva requirements and in a position to receive United States advice and materiel assistance." Calling attention to the views he had submitted on 5 January 1962 (see item), CINCPAC said, "I still think we do not have to take the irrevocable step of publicly disowning the anti-Communist elements in Laos and cutting off our aid to them."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 949, 6 Jan 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 060154Z Jan 62.

6 Jan 62

The Secretary of State provided Ambassador Brown the instructions promised him on 4 January (see item). These instructions, based on the assumption that Boun Oum would probably accept the Co-Chairmen's invitation (see item 3 January 1962), were as follows:

1. Follow up the Co-Chairmen's invitation directly with Boun Oum and Phoumi.
2. Make every effort to persuade Phoumi to accompany Boun Oum, since decisions taken in Phoumi's absence were

not likely to be binding. Phoumi's nonattendance at Geneva would not, however, be the cause for further withholding of the January payment.

3. If Boun Oum went to Geneva, Brown should release the January payment at an "appropriate moment." Brown was authorized to indicate in advance that resumption of payments was contingent upon Boun Oum's accepting the Co-Chairmen's invitation.

4. If Boun Oum refused the invitation, payments would continue to be withheld; subsequent steps would be considered in Washington in the light of Brown's recommendation at that time.

5. Seek to prevent Phoumi and Boun Oum from repeating publicly their adamant stand on the allocation of the Defense and Interior Ministries prior to the Geneva meeting.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 596, 6 Jan 62.

6 Jan 62

Ambassador Gavin forwarded to the Secretary of State reports from French and British diplomats concerning happenings at Geneva and comments made by Souvanna in Paris.

M. Manac'h, Director, Asian Affairs, French Foreign Office, in reviewing events in Geneva, declared that Soviet pressure had forced Quinim to agree, contrary to Souvanna's stated wishes (see items 4 and 5 January 1962), to the immediate issuance of invitations to the Princes for a meeting in Geneva. Manac'h, however, believed that a few days of waiting would be useful, since reports from the French Ambassador at Vientiane indicated that Phoumi and Boun Oum were growing more reasonable.

An officer of the British Embassy reported that Quinim had told Co-Chairman MacDonald that Souvanna had agreed to the immediate dispatch of invitations to the other Princes. British sources further declared that Souvanna had been annoyed with Quinim for accepting in the Prince's name this change of plans. Souvanna, however, had later said that he would go to Geneva whenever the other Princes did. Souphanouvong, he added, had expressed willingness to accept an invitation to Geneva. Souvanna hoped, moreover, that the US would persuade Phoumi to accept, for without Phoumi, Boun Oum's presence was useless.

Souvanna, during a conversation with an officer of the British Embassy, had again urged that the US, while withdrawing its logistic, transportation, and MAAG support from the FAR, should continue to pay Phoumi's soldiers.

Finally, Souvanna suggested to the Embassy officer that Phoumi, rather than accept Souvanna's leadership, might simply disappear from the political scene. In that case, the Prince still would be willing to organize a government according to the 19-man formula already proposed.

(C) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3342, 3343, 6 Jan 62.



6 Jan 62 As instructed by the Secretary of State (see item 2 January 1962), Ambassador Young met with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman to explain US policy for a peaceful settlement in Laos. Thanat, while minimizing the Thai radio broadcast of 2 January (see item 2 January 1962) as an unofficial press item of little consequence, set forth Thai views: Thailand would continue to accept the concept of a neutral Laos and, with "deep misgivings," a coalition under Souvanna. Thailand did not advocate a military solution to the Lao crisis, but it did believe that there was more than one political option open to the West. Balanced representation in the Lao cabinet was the key to an acceptable neutral coalition since it could prevent the Souvanna-Pathet Lao combination, which the Thai government considered now as firmly fixed, from dominating the country. Conceding the Defense and Interior posts to this combination, or even to Souvanna alone, would mean the end of neutral Laos. Thailand, therefore, felt a deepened apprehension over the "inevitable Communist seizure" of Laos and the probable consequent subversion of its own northeast border area. The Thai must concentrate on saving "their own necks next."

Despite this growing concern for its own security, Thailand had acted with restraint and caution in the Lao situation and had assisted the US in carrying out its policy in Laos. Now that the US supported the idea of a Souvanna-led coalition, however, Thailand must consider all hope of a negotiated settlement in Laos with adequate safeguards for Thai security impossible since the Communists would in "no time" be in full control of Laos. As a result of the recent developments in the Lao situation and the "scant" attention given Thailand by her allies, particularly in SEATO and the UN, a growing sentiment for neutralization or independent action was developing in Thailand. Thai apprehensions would be substantially relieved, however, if the US would: take a stand on SEATO reform and revitalization; set forth the priority and scope of its future support and assistance for Thailand (see item 16 January 1962); and divulge its specific plans regarding the Souvanna coalition.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 957, 7 Jan 62.

7 Jan 62 The Secretary of State, "gratified by the Ambassador's excellent approach to Souvanna" (see item 5 January 1962), instructed Ambassador Gavin concerning the manner of following up this interview. Gavin's objective, the Secretary continued, was to take advantage of Souvanna's presence in Europe, where the "Communist pressures of Xieng Khouang" were lacking, to establish a closer understanding with the Prince.

In future talks, Gavin was to emphasize the strong pressures that the US was exerting on the RLG. These, the Secretary of State pointed out, should give evidence of the US desire to aid Souvanna in forming a truly neutral government. Furthermore, the Ambassador should tell Souvanna that the US realized the necessity of paying the men of the FAR and appreciated the Prince's stated desire to prevent the Viet Minh from using Lao territory as a corridor into South Viet Nam.

Secretary Rusk expressed the hope that, when contacts among the Lao factions were renewed at Geneva, Souvanna would display reasonableness and understanding "in order to help Boun Oum and Phoumi get past this very difficult phase of the negotiations." The Secretary believed, however, that it was preferable for Souvanna to remain in Paris until Boun Oum had journeyed to Geneva.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3752, 7 Jan 62.

7 Jan 62

In accordance with instructions that he present a personal message from Assistant Secretary Harriman, Sullivan saw Pushkin at Geneva and informed him that: 1) US attempts to force Boun Oum and Phoumi into sincere negotiations might require the withholding of aid and that, in fact, as "Pushkin has probably noticed," the January financial subsidy had not been deposited and would not be until Boun Oum agreed to meet the other Princes in Geneva; 2) since such pressure would weaken the RLG vis-a-vis the Pathet Lao, "we will need assurances from Pushkin that the Soviets will see to it that the PL do not undertake military action against FAR positions"; 3) however, if the Pathet Lao should nevertheless launch an unprovoked and large-scale attack, US aid to the RLG would be prompt and on the scale needed for a successful defense.

Pushkin's reaction to what Sullivan described as "an almost unprecedented exposure to the Soviets of our entire policy position," was mixed. Seizing on the statement that the United States would back the RLG against a PL attack, he argued that this invalidated the US position, since the RLG would now have a "'license'" to provoke such an attack. However, Pushkin did mention that the Soviets had halted PL military action in the past and that he felt the present PL policy of standing on the defensive was entirely correct. The conversation ended with Pushkin's assurances that Sullivan's message would be transmitted to Moscow precisely as rendered.

Sullivan concluded, as did MacDonald, whom he had been empowered to inform of the conversation, that the Soviets favored a defensive posture by the PL and that Pushkin's remarks on this score constituted "a tentative assurance that no attacks will be launched."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Geneva, FECON 685, 6 Jan 62; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1011, 7 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown submitted to the Secretary of State two further ideas developed during his review with the Country Team of all possible ways of breaking the deadlock in negotiations for a coalition government in Laos (see item 5 January 1962). The second of these he expressed briefly. "We might as last resort try to pressure Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept King as Prime Minister, in which case Phoumi has said he would agree to Souvanna's holding Defense."

The first idea, admittedly leading only to an interim arrangement, required greater explanation. Basically, it elaborated upon a thought expressed by Souvanna in November 1961, when he had looked forward to "establishing his provisional government in Luang Prabang, but with Vientiane and Khang Khay continuing as administrative centers of government with a Vice

Premier in each place." Brown listed the essential features as follows:

1) Provisional coalition government under Souvanna as Prime Minister would be set up in Luang Prabang with Souvanna as Defense Minister and Pheng Phongsavan as Interior Minister. Government composition would be along lines suggested by Souvanna at Vientiane. Cabinet ministers, at least those from center group, would also establish their seats of office in Luang Prabang.

2) Phoumi and Souphanouvong would remain in Vientiane and Khang Khay respectively, each designated Deputy Prime Minister.

3) Defense and Interior Ministers in Luang Prabang would each have two deputies, one in Vientiane and one in Khang Khay. Vientiane deputy ministers could be Phoumi and Leuan respectively, with Khang Khay deputies to be chosen by PL.

4) Existing administrative structures controlled from Vientiane and Khang Khay would initially be left provisionally in place as provided in Zurich agreement.

5) Other important ministries in Luang Prabang could also have deputy ministers (secretaries of state) in Vientiane and Khang Khay answerable in first instance to Deputy Prime Ministers in these two cities. . . .

6) All US and other aid would be channeled through central government at Luang Prabang. . . .

Brown recognized that the scheme "bristles with practical difficulties" and might even result in permanent partition of Laos. Still it seemed to him to offer certain advantages. It would avoid the disintegration of the RLG and FAR that might result from the application of severe US sanctions against Phoumi over an extended period. There was reason to believe the arrangement would be negotiable. If successful, it would produce a single legal government that could promptly send a delegation to Geneva with full authority to issue the declaration of Laotian neutrality and sign the Geneva agreement. The central government in Luang Prabang, despite its provisional character, could begin immediately to integrate the country, "possibly starting with consolidation of various public services and moving without too much delay into unification [of] armed forces and police and demobilization of excess. Problem of unifying Laos would thus be removed from battlefield and three prince slugging match to practical discussions among politicians and technicians." Finally, the arrangement would make it possible, if Phoumi and Souvanna proved willing, for the two "to work together over a period to develop Souvanna's political party, and perhaps develop a real alliance against the PL."

Ambassador Brown described the objective of this policy as "promotion of phased integration of [the] country by patient negotiations among Lao which might even continue for years." It would be compatible with the "Lao penchant for inexact politics based primarily on personal relationships."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 960, 9 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State of various comments made by Souvanna to French and British officials in Paris. The Prince declared that, since Phoumi obviously sought to avoid a meeting of the three Princes, he had decided to give the US time in which to exert pressure on Phoumi. Souvanna, however, had heard reports "Pentagon" were offering advice to the RLG different from that given by the Department of State. The UK Ambassador replied that accounts of differences in US policy regarding Laos were greatly exaggerated and counseled Souvanna to be patient. Souvanna, however, appeared concerned that the US might fail, either because of these internal differences or because of actions by Thailand and South Viet Nam, to convince Phoumi that he should cooperate. The Prince noted that he had stressed to Gavin the need for the US to control its Asian allies. According to British diplomats, Souvanna seemed most concerned about Thailand's supporting Phoumi and interpreted a recent rise in the value of the kip as evidence that such support was indeed being given. A British Embassy officer, however, reassured him that the kip, which had declined too far in value, was merely stabilizing itself.

Souvanna also expressed concern that South Viet Nam and Thailand might withdraw from the Geneva Conference. The UK Ambassador responded to the Prince's statement by suggesting that the Co-Chairmen go to Laos to assist in the stalled negotiations, thus prolonging the Conference. Souvanna "took to the idea," suggesting that King Savang might regard it as more proper for the kingdom's problems to be discussed in Laos than at Geneva.

The British raised with Souvanna the subject of the demobilization of the Pathet Lao. The Prince indicated that he had discussed the problem, which he did not consider insuperable, with Souphanouvong and other leaders of the Pathet Lao. They had agreed to demobilize if Phoumi did likewise and if early elections were held. Although Souvanna at one time assured the UK Ambassador that he would not hold elections while the factions "had guns in their hands," he later spoke of holding elections after a "partial demobilization."

Souvanna thereupon expressed his belief that Communist China not only agreed with Russia regarding Laos but also needed peace because of internal problems. He contended that, under such circumstances, he could gain for the kingdom ten years of stability, after which Laos would be safe from Communism. Not only could he "play off" China against Russia, he also could "short-circuit" North Viet Nam by appealing directly to either of the other two Communist powers. Souvanna also gave categorical assurance

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that he would call upon the ICC to halt Viet Minh infiltration through Laos into South Viet Nam.

In conversations with the French, Souvanna "remained a little fuzzy" regarding demobilization and the timing of elections. Nevertheless, he did suggest that the factions be represented in a 15,000-man unified Army in proportion to the number of cabinet portfolios held by each group. He again expressed concern (see item 6 January 1962) that Boun Oum would not bring Phoumi to Geneva. He dismissed questions regarding ICC participation in the unification of the factional armies on the ground that the integration of forces was a domestic matter. He also spurned Sihanouk's suggestion that the Princes meet in Cambodia.

Finally, Souvanna repeated his earlier statements (see items 4 and 5 January 1962) about Soviet aid and admitted receiving assistance from North Viet Nam. He denied, however, that either the Soviets or Communist Chinese were represented at Xieng Khouang, but he did not state his future plans regarding these nations.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3385, 9 Jan 62; 3417, 11 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In accordance with suggestions by the US, UK, and French delegations at Geneva, a French representative in Paris agreed to propose the following to Souvanna on 9 January: 1) that one of his first acts upon becoming Prime Minister of a government of national union should be the issuance of a cease-fire proclamation which would record his intention of unifying the Laotian armed forces, provide against political reprisals, and, "hopefully," refer to the RLG's intention of keeping the Conference Co-Chairmen informed of the progress made in integrating the armed forces; 2) that he make no direct reference to SEATO in the neutrality declaration; and 3) that he begin, with French assistance, drafting the Lao neutrality declaration while in Paris.

It was reported that Souvanna was willing to consider a cease-fire proclamation but was non-committal regarding the contents. Although at first utterly opposed to the ICC having integration of the armed forces as one of its functions, he later admitted that integration was a "matter of concern" for the ICC. He agreed to omit a reference to SEATO. No discussion of the neutrality declaration took place.

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1014, 9 Jan 62; CONFE 1021, 10 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 Ambassador Young delivered an informal memorandum to Thai Prime Minister Sarit summarizing the US position on Laos. For his part, Sarit seemed to disapprove a Geneva meeting of the three Princes and any surrender of the Interior and Defense posts to Souvanna. He did not, however, indicate whether he would or would not try to prevent either action. Sarit remarked that he had never really agreed with US policy on Laos but had never interfered in the past. Fatalistically, he concluded the discussion

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on Laos by telling the Ambassador to "go ahead and let things deteriorate in your own way."

Ambassador Young commented that this discussion had once again highlighted the basic difference of opinion regarding Souvanna that existed between Thailand and the US. Sarit reiterated the Thai belief that erection of a Souvanna government would mean surrender of Laos to the Communists. Thailand would then be subject to Communist infiltration across a long frontier, "just as Laos and Viet Nam have been." Sarit wished to know what plans the United States had for retrieving the situation if it became clear that the Souvanna solution was leading to a Communist take-over of Laos. Further, should the Communists come to dominate Laos, what US support would be available to Thailand in resisting the inevitable infiltration?

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 969, 970, 9 Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In reply to a request from the JCS for specific information regarding the capabilities of the opposing forces in Laos, urgently needed for the preparation of a SNIE, CINCPAC forwarded a message he had received from CHMAAG Laos, estimating that North Vietnamese troops in Laos consisted of 2 headquarters, 5 to 6 infantry battalions, and 2 infantry companies, with a total strength of 3,000 to 4,000, plus an additional 2,400 advisors (including gunners and radar operators) with Pathet Lao and Kong Le units. He estimated that since the end of the rainy season in September 1961 an average of 195 tons of supplies per week had been flown into Laos from North Viet Nam, plus an additional total of at least 2200 tons trucked over Route 7 from 15 November to 15 January and an indeterminable amount over Routes 8 and 12. Communist forces, according to Chief MAAG, no longer possessed the strength to launch a series of successful attacks either simultaneously or in rapid sequence nor the mobility to shift forces rapidly so as to mass overwhelming superiority at several strategic areas in sequence. The enemy did have the capability, however, of rapid and overwhelming reinforcement from across the North Viet Nam border with minimum danger of detection in areas where it might choose to attack.

CINCPAC referred the JCS to his message of 5 January (see item) and in reply to the specific questions of the JCS stated that of the enemy forces estimated in CHMAAG's message, 5 artillery/mortar batteries and 3 AA batteries were believed composed principally of North Vietnamese in addition to part of an engineer battalion; that since the cease-fire the enemy's consumption of supplies had about equalled the amount received, i.e., the 30-day stockpile estimated at the time of the cease-fire was being maintained; that if hostilities were resumed, the Meo alone could not stop the supply support of the Pathet Lao-Kong Le forces, but that it was extremely vulnerable to air attack; that Meo activities should be recognized for what they were--hit and run blows that were disruptive only and mostly concentrated in the Plane des Jarres area--and should not be overestimated, but nevertheless their capabilities had not been fully exploited; that he agreed with the assessment of enemy capabilities in the message from CHMAAG and concurred in the latter's view that "time



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is on our side," but that the balance could be changed by North Vietnamese intervention so that "we must be ready and willing to fight . . . , if all other measures fail."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 2821, 062057Z Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 071730Z Jan 62 (readdressed to JCS, 092117Z); (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 092052Z Jan 62.

9 Jan 62 In response to a request of the Department of the Army, the US Army Attache (USARMA) in Vientiane submitted his estimate of the military capability of the opposing forces in Laos. Speaking with the concurrence of CHMAAG Laos, USARMA stated that FAR morale and combat effectiveness had improved markedly since the cease-fire. The relatively quiet conditions had enabled the FAR to devote its time effectively to training for the first time. The expansion of the MAAG into lower echelons of the FAR had been particularly effective in instilling some spirit into the Lao troops, and the various formal training courses in leadership and technical skills were turning out personnel that were badly needed. Successful small unit operations had shown increased FAR effectiveness and had given FAR officers and men some confidence in their own abilities. Even in those operations that did not succeed, the FAR had demonstrated an ability to regroup, reorganize, and continue operations with an "aggressive-offensive" attitude. A new FAR desire to take the offensive had, in fact, given CHMAAG "no end of difficulty" in his attempts to dissuade the Lao from committing obvious cease-fire violations. Coupling all these gains in FAR effectiveness with the improvements made since the cease-fire in the status of FAR equipment and weapons, USARMA concluded that, despite similar efforts on the part of the enemy, the FAR had improved more than its opposition.

There was not enough evidence to judge the exact nature and intensity of the enemy programs, but Bloc equipment had undoubtedly continued to flow into enemy territory--40 to 50 armored cars had recently appeared on the Plaine des Jarres--and some troops had received artillery training in North Viet Nam. However, difficulties in transportation and the very thinness of enemy ranks made it unlikely that any substantial number of the approximately one-third of the enemy who were untrained recruits had left Laos for extensive training. There were, moreover, indications that enemy morale was no better than fair. Meo harassments, poor living conditions, RLG psychological warfare, disenchantment with Communist ideology, and, among the neutralist troops, impatience for a political settlement: these among others were factors that contributed to sagging morale and frictions between the Kong Le and Pathet Lao units.

USARMA then estimated FAR and RLG capabilities in specific military and political situations, as follows:

1. If the enemy was not further reinforced by Viet Minh cadres and if MAAG advisers remained with FAR units, the FAR could hold its ground against the enemy, except possibly in the Thakhek area.

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2. The FAR did not yet have the ability to interdict Routes 8, 9, and 12--three principal east-west routes in the Laotian panhandle--as it now did Route 7 in the Plaines des Jarres. If present guerrilla operations were expanded, however, the FAR might in time, with the assistance of SVN troops, be able to successfully extend its operations along these roads.

3. If the special security forces of Colonel Siho remained in the Vientiane area, the RLG had little to fear from coup attempts or sabotage.

4. Because the FAR felt that it was improving with time and US advice, the RLG led by Phoumi could survive prolonged, inconclusive combat. Furthermore, the longer the present state of truce continued, the better the FAR would become. Additionally, the Lao people were losing their confidence in Souvanna as he demonstrated more and more his close association with Souphanouvong. The RLG would probably, therefore, gain political support as well as military strength as time passed.

5. It was not probable that either the FAR or the enemy could mount a surprise military campaign without the other gaining prior knowledge; the FAR might, however, have a chance of achieving surprise if it conducted an operation from southern Laos.

USARMA believed, in short, that the FAR-Meo forces had definitely improved vis-a-vis their opposition. They could hold the enemy, as the enemy was presently constituted, but they could not successfully engage an enemy reinforced by additional Communist Bloc troops.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 191004, 9 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62

During a luncheon given for Souvanna by Ambassador Gavin, the Prince, after referring to the RLG's defiance of US economic pressures, remarked that the US should remember to exert appropriate pressures on Thailand and South Viet Nam. He then repeated his frequently stated advice that the US should continue to pay the FAR.

Secretary Rusk's hopes that Souvanna would be sympathetic toward Boun Oum and Phoumi during any Geneva meeting (see item 7 January 1962) were dashed. When Gavin offered this suggestion, Souvanna replied with a bitter recital of Boun Oum's discourtesy at Vientiane and a lengthy commentary on Boun Oum's and Phoumi's love of ostentation.

After Gavin had indicated that the US was prepared to discuss the aid that would be given a Souvanna government, the Prince expressed interest and enumerated such basic needs as schools and hospitals. Souvanna urged that, wherever possible, US aid should be in the form of a specific project. He preferred this course to the turning over of funds, with the attendant danger of "diversion by Lao and Americans." He also noted that he had asked North Viet Nam for specialists who would study the possible resettlement of the Montagnards.



The Prince stated that he had warned Kong Le and the Pathet Lao that, if they violated the cease-fire, he would refuse to return to Laos. The MAAG, he hoped, would stop "inciting the Meo" to attack villages in the Xieng Khouang area. The populace, he continued, had grown disenchanted with the Pathet Lao, and at least one PL battalion had sought to defect to him. To exploit popular sentiments, Souvanna, to the extent allowed by limited funds, had dispatched representatives to take over local administration and thus extend his influence.

When asked about elections, the Prince merely declared that no ballots should be cast while the factions retained their arms. In any free election, he declared, he could not fail to win, since 80 per cent of the citizenry supported him.

Souvanna dismissed as RLG propaganda reports that Chinese and Viet Minh troops were present in Laos. The Prince further claimed that, while in Vientiane, he had learned that Phoumi was preparing to attack Tha Thom, Muong Sai, and along Highway 12. This information, he continued, had been forwarded to the ICC. The Prince added that, after his departure from Vientiane, the RLG had made many arrests, presumably among his followers.

In reply to questions about Sino-Soviet differences, Souvanna said that he was convinced that both nations desired a truly neutral Laos. He would, however, be willing to "play the card of Sino-Soviet rivalry in the Far East" in order to maintain the independence of the kingdom.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3402, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62

At the conclusion of an extended exchange of messages among the State Department, the US Geneva delegation, and the US Embassy at Vientiane, the Department described as "non-negotiable" the proposals that Ambassador Brown had made on 28 December 1961 concerning an enlarged role for the ICC in the integration of the Lao armed forces. Discussions between the US Geneva delegation and Quinim indicated that Souvanna would object to certain of the proposals, while the permanent status that the proposals tacitly assigned to the ICC would, so the US Geneva delegation had stated, be resisted by the Communist states and by India and Canada as well.

The State Department followed with a specific proposal which would deal with the ICC question and would, hopefully, be included in the neutrality declaration to be signed by the Laotian government:

The Government of Laos undertakes, with such assistance from the International Control Commission as the Government of Laos may deem necessary, to bring about the unification of the various armed forces in Laos into a single national army and the demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of this national army in order that the continued existence of such excess forces shall not constitute a threat to the maintenance of the cease-fire.

Should this be unacceptable, reference to the ICC's function would be eliminated, although the State Department voiced the hope that Souvanna would concur in the US interpretation that the ICC might nevertheless assist as requested.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 896, 28 Dec 61; Geneva to SecState, CONF 987, 29 Dec 61; SecState to Geneva, FECON 694, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 The UK Foreign Office defined as "inappropriate" the proposal of 9 January (see item) concerning the drafting of a RLG neutrality declaration in Paris with French assistance, and suggested instead that the US, UK, and French delegations at Geneva handle the matter jointly, on the basis of the foreign policy sections of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961). The US delegation was authorized by the State Department to participate on this basis.

(Canadian representatives joined the drafting group on 12 January.)

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1021, 10 Jan 62; SecState to Geneva, FECON 694, 10 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1032, 12 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State on the growing pessimism and disappointment in Thailand over the US course of action in Laos. Thai military leaders had become extremely critical regarding US treatment of Phoumi and the failure of the US to consult with its major ally in SEA on the Lao problem. The Ambassador quoted the Chief of Staff, Supreme Command, an outspoken friend of the US, as urging Young to "talk some sense to the US Government"; otherwise Thailand would have to take a new look at its pro-Western policy.

The Ambassador also quoted a Thai editorial critical of US policy in Laos which ended: "Thailand, on the other hand, would prefer Laos partitioned to having pro-Communist coalition government or coalition government dominated by pro-Communist elements."

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 974, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Continuing the development of US policy for furnishing aid to a future neutral government of Laos (see item 22 December 1961), the Secretary of State forwarded draft guidance for military assistance planning to the Embassy in Vientiane. According to the Secretary, US relations with a Souvanna regime would be radically different from relations with past and present Lao governments; this difference would be particularly marked in the area of military assistance. The proposed Geneva Agreement and past US policy would "limit drastically" the US role in Lao military affairs. Any US action that seemed to be an attempt to maintain the present US position in Laos would make Souvanna suspicious, would bring on a strong Pathet Lao reaction, and would thereby jeopardize the political and economic programs which, the Secretary emphasized, would be the principal US efforts to ensure the neutrality and independence of the new government.

Such military assistance as might be furnished at the RLG's request would have to harmonize with these political and economic programs.

The Secretary believed that, since large quantities of military equipment were already in Laos, the Souvanna government would initially need little more than "force maintenance material" in the way of military assistance. Even for this limited assistance, however, a new US-Lao agreement would have to be negotiated if the Geneva Agreement prohibited US civilian military advisors in Laos. If the US was thereby barred from inspecting the uses to which its assistance funds and equipment were put, then military assistance could be furnished only by Presidential waiver under Section 614 of the Foreign Assistance Act [Public Law 87-195, 87th Congress, S.1983, 4 September 1961. Section 614 empowered the President to expend certain funds for military assistance "without regard to the requirements of the Act."]

Another problem the US would encounter in dealing with the Souvanna government would be the retrieving of military equipment that the US and RLG considered surplus to the needs of the FAR. The RLG was obligated by the terms of acquisition to consult the US in the disposal of surplus military assistance equipment, but the Secretary anticipated that the subject would be a difficult one to broach at the outset of negotiations. He noted that the US would probably desire to turn some items of surplus equipment over to the Lao police forces and the ICC.

Looking forward to the first meeting of US representatives with Souvanna following formation of his government, the Secretary indicated that it would be important to impress Souvanna clearly on that occasion with the understanding that the US had no desire to maintain its previous dominant role in Lao military affairs. The US wished only to do what Souvanna thought would assist him in following a neutral and independent policy. The US might assure Souvanna initially, for instance, that the MAAG would be withdrawn in accordance with the Geneva Agreement. US representatives should take no initiative in offering military assistance, but at the same time, they should avoid any implication that the US would deny assistance to the FAR. If Souvanna asked what the US was prepared to do, he should be told that the US believed the RLG would need only "force maintenance material" in the immediate future and that, at any rate, the first step toward the resumption of US assistance should be joint RLG-US discussions to determine the exact nature of the assistance needed by the RLG and the legal provisions for it, and to designate surplus equipment and decide its disposition.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, CA-782, 10 Jan 62.

10 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown received word that Boun Oum was sending a letter accepting the invitation of the Co-Chairmen to attend a meeting of the three Princes in Geneva, and that Phoumi was to be a member of the RLG delegation. Text of the letter was to be released the following day.

Although there was a hopeful aspect to the fact that the three Princes were now scheduled to meet at Geneva, Ambassador Brown warned that Phoumi's current attitude was one of "determination to squeeze Souvanna out of the picture" and that a showdown with him might still become necessary. The Ambassador had heard that Boun Oum planned to declare at Geneva that Souvanna had failed in his mission to form a cabinet and that the RLG no longer considered him Premier-designate. Further, it was understood that Phoumi intended to convene the National Congress to vote full powers to the King. By the time Boun Oum made his projected declaration, Phoumi hoped to have in hand a letter from the King summoning the three Princes to Luang Prabang. The next step in Phoumi's scheme was to have the King assume active direction of a government.

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 969, 10 Jan 62;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 965, 10 Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 Special National Intelligence Estimate 58-62 evaluated the relative military capabilities of opposing forces in Laos. Reflecting the earlier reports of CHMAAG Laos, [REDACTED] USARMA Vientiane, and CINCPAC (see items 28 December 1961 and 2, 5, and 9 January 1962) the SNIE reported that both government and antigovernment forces had increased their capabilities during the cease-fire, but that the government forces had improved more than their foes.

The government forces had been defeated and demoralized and were near collapse in May 1961. Since then, however, they had grown to a strength of 71,500 men: 51,500 regular army, 11,000 auto defense, and 9,000 Meo guerrillas. They were much better trained and equipped than they had been at the time of the cease-fire, and they had acquired some self-confidence. By reason of extensive technical, logistical, and communications support from US, Thai, and Filipino personnel, moreover, they probably had gained an important advantage over the enemy in supply and mobility. Regular army units had been "stiffened" in selective instances by US trainers, and the Meo tribesmen had become an effective guerrilla force in the enemy rear.

The antigovernment forces had also been strengthened. Their size had increased from 20,000 to 34,000: 19,000 Pathet Lao, 6,000 Kong Le, 4,000 Kham Ouane, 1,600 Viet Minh cadres, and 3,500 Viet Minh combat troops. The training facilities for antigovernment forces were limited, however, and many of the new troops, particularly those in Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces, were probably inadequately trained. In addition, there was evidence of some friction between the Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces on the one hand and Pathet Lao on the other because of inequities in the distribution of supplies and jealousy regarding command responsibilities. The antigovernment forces had received considerable additional equipment from the Communist Bloc, most notably 40 to 50 light amphibious tanks, suitable for defending the Plaine des Jarres and for limited use elsewhere.

Complicating any assessment of the over-all capability of either side was the wide variation in the effectiveness of different units on the same side; each force had its poor and elite units. The critical weaknesses of the government forces had been lack of motivation, unstable morale, and poor leadership. Whether or not these weaknesses had been successfully remedied by training programs and recent small-scale military successes was not yet known; these forces had not yet undergone the strain of serious combat. In past times of quiet or success their morale had appeared to be high, only to dissolve in the face of adversity. Poor morale was not a critical weakness among the antigovernment forces. The Pathet Lao had maintained discipline and relatively good effectiveness for a number of years, through successes and failures. Their morale probably remained good, as probably did the morale and effectiveness of the Viet Minh units. The Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces, however, maintained only "spotty" morale; probably only a few of these units would perform well.

Yet another factor in estimating effectiveness, this one currently working to the advantage of the government forces, was the deployment and mission of forces. The government forces, with greatly reduced territory to control, could concentrate their strength, maintain some reserves, and establish short and reasonably dependable lines of communication. The antigovernment forces, on the other hand, in seeking to control large and widely separated areas in Laos, had increased their logistical problems, lessened their mobility, and diffused their strength. In their rear areas, they had poor lines of lateral communication, some of which were harassed by the Meo guerrillas.

A final consideration advanced by the SNIE was that the Laotian terrain and other difficulties in conducting conventional military operations in Laos would make it relatively easy for either side to deny control of territory to the other.

Bearing all of the above factors in mind and assuming that there would be no change in the levels of aid and assistance given the two sides by their respective sponsors, the SNIE then hypothesized as follows:

1. If the antigovernment forces concentrated an attack upon an important government stronghold, including "almost any one of the major towns along the Mekong," they could probably capture their objective, but they could not hold it against a determined government counterattack.

2. Similarly, the government forces could make initial gains in an offensive on the Tha Thom-Xieng Khouang perimeter or in southern Laos. If the Pathet Lao and Kong Le troops were defeated by a sustained government attack, they would quickly revert to guerrilla tactics and continue to contest government authority in widespread areas. In this event, the government forces could not establish firm control of these areas. Specifically, the government would not be able to consolidate its hold on the Plaine des Jarres, the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area, or the Tchepone area.

On balance, the SNIE concluded, the government forces would have a slight edge if fighting were resumed on a pattern comparable to that prior to the cease-fire, intensified only by the strengthening of both sides. Furthermore, this edge would increase as time went on if the military situation remained quiet and if the recent rates of improvement of the two sides continued. The antigovernment forces continued, however, to have the greater guerrilla warfare capability. Additionally, if at any time the government forces threatened areas considered "critical" by the Communists, the antigovernment forces would be quickly and effectively reinforced from North Viet Nam in whatever degree necessary to the protection of the threatened area.

(See item 31 January 1962 for a significant modification of the above conclusions.)

(S) SNIE 58-62, 11 Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that the FAR-MAAG program to deactivate approximately 8,000 FAR troops (see item 2 December 1961) would probably be cast aside by Phoumi because of the US campaign to force him to cooperate in negotiations for a coalition government. CHMAAG related that during December 1961 the Ministry of Defense had designated certain FAR units for deactivation, without announcing an effective date. CHMAAG felt that more recently Phoumi had begun to consider continuing his resistance even if US aid was withdrawn, by returning his soldiers, still armed, to their villages where they would continue to fight for him until such time as he could resume full support for them. Accordingly, CHMAAG expected that Phoumi would in the future pay only lip service to the deactivation plan; that is, that Phoumi would remove units from the FAR force structure, and therefore from MAP support, but would continue them in existence, paying them from "other sources" and supplying them from MAP stocks. The Ministry of Defense had, in fact, already stated that the deactivated troops would continue to draw pay. CHMAAG assured CINCPAC that he would continue to exert every effort to convince Phoumi that the FAR should institute a "true reduction in force" to MAP-approved levels, but he observed that success was not probable while the current US-RLG friction continued.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 111305Z Jan 62.

11 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin passed on to the Secretary of State information received by Manac'h from an intelligence source. According to this French report, Phoumi's forces were preparing to attack Mahaxay in central Laos and Tchepone to the south. The French also claimed that the RLG was considering acts of violence against Americans, if the US pressure on Phoumi were maintained. Arrests of neutralists in Vientiane had already begun, and the population was nervous.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3417, 11 Jan 62.

11, 13  
Jan 62

[REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos recommended [REDACTED] on 11 January that they be authorized to arm Kha resistance forces from US stocks in Thailand controlled by the Department of Defense, and that the costs of creating such a force be counted as part of



the program of supporting the Meo. The US officials reported that Phoumi had again approved the concept of creating a Kha resistance movement; the Lao leader claimed, however, that he would be unable to provide equipment from FAR stocks. The news of the arming of the first 100-man Kha unit by the MAAG (see item 22 December 1961) had already spread among the Kha villagers, CHMAAG [redacted] reported further, and the MAAG already had special forces teams ready to train more Kha. This momentum should not be lost. Kha operations could help to secure important areas in southern Laos. The Laos Country Team approved the creation of a Kha resistance program; only approval from Washington was lacking.

On 13 January, the Department of Defense [redacted] informed [redacted] that up to 300 Kha tribesmen could be armed in the manner recommended, for the purpose of interdicting Viet Cong trails into South Viet Nam. The use of up to one million kip and the drawing of necessary arms from US stockpiles in Thailand were also approved. (See item 25 January 1962.) [redacted]

11-18  
Jan 62

According to the J-3 Southeast Asia Situation Report of this date, "excellent relationships" were reported by CHMAAG Laos to be prevailing between US Special Forces advisors and FAR units, with the FAR accepting advisors down to company and platoon levels in some cases. The only exception was in the 5th Military Region, the headquarters of which were at Vientiane, where relations between the local MAAG advisor and the regional commander had been "somewhat stymied" by news that all US military aid had been stopped.

There had been no significant change in military activity, according to the Situation Report, except for stiffening enemy opposition in the Muong Sai area, which had necessitated the despatch of two companies to reinforce the FAR units in that area.

Information provided by CHMAAG a week later disclosed that this action near Muong Sai, a Pathet Lao stronghold and supply depot, had been on a larger scale than any other for several months past, and that it had resulted in a serious setback for the FAR. Sweeping up the Nam Beng Valley, elements of Group Mobile 11 (including the 3rd Infantry Battalion and the 15th Volunteer Battalion) encountered stiff enemy resistance on 7-8 January about 15 miles from Muong Sai. An enemy counterattack by an estimated three battalions (two Pathet Lao and one North Vietnamese), totalling about 1,000 men, dispersed the FAR units and forced them to withdraw hastily towards the Mekong River, about 80 miles in a straight-line distance from Muong Sai. By 14 January the FAR troops had crossed the Mekong into Sayaboury province, where the two battalions spent the remainder of the month being reorganized and refitted.

(TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitreps #2-62, 11 Jan #3-62, 18 Jan, #4-62, 25 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos

to CINCPAC, JCS, et al., 171618Z Jan 62, DA IN 193939;  
(S-NOFORN) Msg, CINCUSARPAC to AIG 731, et al., 192231Z  
Jan 62, DA IN 194182; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to  
CINCPAC, JCS, et al., 191740Z Jan 62, DA IN 194614.

- 12 Jan 62. The US January cash grant to the RLG was deposited.  
Suspension of the sale of foreign exchange by the Laotian  
National Bank remained in effect.  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1008, 17 Jan 62.

- 12 Jan 62 M. Manac'h of the French Foreign Office and Souvanna  
exchanged views regarding various aspects of the Zurich  
communique (see item 22 June 1961). The principal subject  
discussed was the integration of the factional armies, but  
the prohibition of reprisals and the statement on alliances  
to be included in the neutrality declaration also were  
mentioned. Souvanna, after observing that the question  
of alliances was "virtually recognized," raised no objections  
to French views concerning the prohibition of reprisals and  
the formation of a unified Army. The Prince seemed more  
positive than he had been in his last conversation with  
Manac'h (see item 9 January 1962).

Souvanna stated that demobilization should take place  
before elections were held, since the presence of factional  
armed forces would stifle the democratic process.  
Approximately six to seven months would elapse between the  
installation of the coalition and the election of a government  
to succeed it. During this interval three Secretaries of  
State for Defense, one from each contending faction, would  
supervise the process of demobilization. The cadre of the  
unified Army would be selected from among the Lao career  
soldiers, while existing laws requiring military service  
by the citizenry could fill the ranks of the reconstituted  
force. Souvanna, Manac'h believed, was aware of the economic  
and social problems that would arise from the demobilization  
of the factional armies.

Since Souvanna desired that the new Army "be what it  
was before the beginning of the present troubles so Laos  
would not again fall under military dictatorship," the  
kingdom also would require the services of a gendarmerie  
and a police force. The gendarmerie would be responsible  
for military security and would guarantee the loyalty of  
the Army. The police force, composed of civilians and under  
control of the Minister of Interior, would serve local  
civilian authority by, among other things, guarding against  
subversion.

Souvanna, when questioned about French instructors for  
the unified Army, stated that it would be premature to discuss  
the matter at this time. He did, however, agree to give  
the French ample time to plan for such activity. The Prince  
seemed confident that there would be no difficulty in  
negotiating the type of Lao-French agreement called for in  
the Geneva Protocol.

Souvanna, after listening as Manac'h likened North  
and South Viet Nam to the two Germanies, refused to commit  
himself regarding the recognition of North Viet Nam.  
Manac'h believed that this problem could best be dealt  
with at Geneva.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 3445, 13 Jan 62; 3456,  
15 Jan 62.



12 Jan 62 After being informed by MacDonald that he and Co-Chairman Pushkin had discussed the idea of holding a plenary session of the Geneva Conference with the three Princes present, Sullivan expressed strong US opposition to this idea, arguing that a public forum might simply lead to propaganda speeches by the Princes. "After some fairly blunt exchanges," Sullivan and MacDonald worked out a plan, of which MacDonald was to inform Pushkin, for ensuring that the forthcoming meetings of the Princes were conducted with a minimum of public friction and opportunities for propaganda and that time would be available for the US delegation to exert pressure on Boun Oum and Phoumi, for the Co-Chairmen to consult on procedural matters, and for Assistant Secretary Harriman (arriving in Geneva on 14 January) to meet with Pushkin.  
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1034, 12 Jan 62.

12 Jan 62 Ambassador Young delivered a letter to Prime Minister Sarit, an authorized, full-scale exposition of US policy on Laos. The letter stated that the US continued to seek a stable, effective, and independent government in Laos while insisting upon adequate safeguards for the interests of the Free World, including Thailand. In this connection Ambassador Young was authorized to reiterate his government's position as conveyed to Sarit on 3 July 1961. The US wish to keep negotiations on Laos open until a peaceful solution was reached. At the same time the US was determined to avoid unacceptable concessions and would not approve any arrangement that would facilitate the Communist domination of Laos. The Ambassador was authorized to repeat to Sarit the US position on the composition of a neutral Lao government as outlined in the memorandum of 5 September 1961 (see item).

The US also wanted to assure Thailand that it had never lessened its concern for the problems of SEA and was determined to meet its obligations in that area, as evidenced by its all-out effort in South Viet Nam and increasing military assistance to Thailand. Because Thailand was one of its best friends and closest allies in SEA, the US had given Thailand binding assurances. "Thailand can continue to count on our support under these commitments," the letter continued. In pursuing its present course of action in Laos as long as it saw reasonable chance for achieving an acceptable peaceful settlement, the US intended to maintain the friendship of such a valuable ally as Thailand. The US would continue to emphasize the immediate and long-range security interests of Thailand as defined by the Thai Government.

The US did not believe that the present unstable situation in Laos could continue indefinitely; should hostilities break out, the present government would be incapable of withstanding a major Communist offensive. Thus, the current situation would probably deteriorate in a way directly harmful to Thailand and SEA unless prompt political measures were taken. In particular, the US viewed with concern the threat of Communist infiltration of South Viet Nam and Thailand through Laos. The sooner an effective independent government could be established in Laos and a written promise could be extracted from the USSR respecting

that independent government and its territory, the greater would be the chance for South Viet Nam, with considerable outside aid, to control its Lao frontier and Thailand its northern borders.

The US was satisfied that considerable headway had been made at Geneva in piecing together an acceptable "package" for peaceful settlement. One key to an acceptable political settlement was the establishment within the national coalition of a non-Communist group including General Phoumi in a high civilian post. Another key was to deny sensitive positions in significant ministries to the Communists. The US had agreed to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister if he lived up to certain conditions, and from available evidence he seemed to be trying to satisfy those conditions. If Phoumi insisted on retaining either the Defense or Interior post, however, the other would have to go to the Pathet Lao, a situation inimical to both Thailand and the US. Moreover, a division of these posts between Phoumi and the Pathet Lao would result in an unstable government, increasing the capabilities of the Communists for penetrating and subverting other areas of SEA. The US believed that very positive advantages had been gained at Geneva for the security of SEA, in particular the Soviet guarantee of Lao neutrality. This and other advantages could be lost, however, "by wrong tactics and untimely actions regarding Laos."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 960, 7 Jan 62; Bangkok to SecState, 998, 13 Jan 62.

12 Jan 62 In a message

the Laos Country Team recommended that the US continue to expand the local resistance and defense capabilities of the population of northern and central Laos in order to prevent further Pathet Lao encroachments in those areas. This expansion should take place as rapidly as possible without compromising the security of the operation or unduly provoking the enemy. There was little danger, the Country Team thought, of the present RLG ever finding out about such a program. The Country Team sought to justify its recommendation as follows:

1. Whatever the outcome in Laos, whether partition, resumption of hostilities, or successful formation of a coalition government, it would be to the distinct advantage of the US and any non-Communist Lao government if the present Pathet Lao access to, and consolidation of control over, the population of northern and central Laos could be blocked or even reduced. If the Pathet Lao were not prevented at this time from consolidating their hold on these areas, then all later political, psychological or military efforts of any new RLG to recapture these areas would most likely be unsuccessful.

2. The various tribal minorities who comprised the bulk of the population in northern Laos were strongly opposed to the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh and were, furthermore, "not seriously 'separatist'" in their sentiments regarding the present RLG. Neither were they particularly opposed to the Lao neutralists, except insofar as Souvanna was reputed to be bound closely to the Pathet Lao. If these tribesmen were aided now in the defense of their

homes, any new RLG that treated them properly would find them loyal and resistant to Communist agitations and propagandizing.

3. Armed tribesmen would be able to harass the enemy's lines of communications and deny him local sources of supply and intelligence. Conversely, the US and any future RLG would gain valuable intelligence on Pathet Lao and Viet Minh political and military activities in Laos. In addition, the tribesmen along the Lao-DRV border would observe Viet Minh compliance, or lack thereof, with their promise not to infiltrate either Laos or South Viet Nam through Laos.

The Country Team believed that a slightly different emphasis should be given to programs in northern and central Laos, respectively, and presented outline programs for each area.

In northern Luang Prabang province and the Nam Tha area, the primary purpose of the program would be to strengthen local defense capabilities, the will to resist Pathet Lao encroachments, and the willingness to report on enemy activities. The Country Team believed that the issuing of Springfield 1903 rifles would be adequate for these purposes and less expensive than providing the full 100-man weapons units used to arm the Meo. If '03s were available, 5,000 should be shipped to Thailand; 2,500 to be distributed in the northern area of Laos and 2,500 to be held in Thailand for similar subsequent distribution elsewhere. (If these last 2,500 were not used, they could be issued to the Meo as "turn-in weapons" in the event of demobilization. The Country Team did not think that the better weapons actually used by the Meo could be recovered.)

In the Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces, and in central Laos, the purpose of the program would be not only to increase local defense capabilities, but also to increase the existing military resistance of established guerrilla units. For this purpose, [redacted] should be authorized to draw more modern weapons from US stockpiles in Thailand for arming additional tribesmen in the "gradualist" fashion described [redacted] in earlier messages (see item 2 January 1962). The Country Team did not envisage this program as a "recruiting spree," but rather a controlled response to tribal demands for weapons. Thus, new recruits would not be discouraged by a lack of US response to their initiative and the "psychologically vital" momentum of the resistance movement would be maintained.

The Country Team believed itself to be the body best able to determine the proper tempo and areas for expansion. It therefore recommended that it be given the authority to oversee this expansion of the resistance program. (See item 5 February 1962.) [redacted]

13 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense recommending policies for South Viet Nam, the JCS presented at length their views of the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian mainland. Advancing portions of CINCPAC's appraisal of Communist tactics in Laos as they affected South Viet Nam and Thailand (see item 23 December 1961), which appraisal had already been cited in a JCS policy recommendation on Laos (see item 5 January 1962), the JCS averred that the fall of South Viet Nam would mean the eventual Communist domination of the entire Southeast Asian mainland. The JCS urged several courses of action to counter Communist efforts to take South Viet Nam. They also noted that, if US combat forces eventually had to be introduced into Southeast Asia, the following three factors would be of greatest importance:

1. Any war in Southeast Asia would be a "peninsula and island" campaign. All elements of the US armed forces were particularly well suited for such action by reason of their experiences in World War II and Korea.

2. The Communists could support only limited forces during a war in Southeast Asia, because of logistical and transportation restrictions imposed by nature.

3. The present world military posture of the US was such that existing contingency plans for Southeast Asia could be implemented without unacceptable reduction of the US capability to carry out planned operations in Europe relating to Berlin.

(TS) JCSM-33-62 to SecDef, 13 Jan 62, derived from JCS 2343/70, 13 Jan 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (30 Nov 61).

13 Jan 62 The Soviet Charge d'Affaires in Washington, Smirnovsky, presented an official statement to Secretary Rusk, complaining that the stubborn attitude of Boun Oum and Phoumi, especially their insistence that their faction receive both the Defense and Interior Ministries in the projected coalition government, was blocking a settlement in Laos. Smirnovsky charged that the United States "has it in its power" to bring Boun Oum and Phoumi to terms.

Secretary Rusk denied that the United States could exercise such control over the RLG, and he rejected some of Smirnovsky's other statements as well. Rusk noted, for instance, that Souphanouvong's statement upon arriving at the last meeting of the Princes had been contentious and had made no contribution to a reasonable spirit of negotiation. He also pointed out that the three Princes had not yet really come to grips with the detailed negotiations necessary to the formation of a coalition government. The "best influence" of all interested Governments would be necessary to maintain the cease-fire and push the negotiations to agreement.

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 701, 13 Jan 62.

14 Jan 62 General Phoumi told the press during a stopover in Bangkok that the US had announced the intention of halting all aid to the RLG if it refused to relinquish the Interior and Defense posts in the coalition government to Souvanna.

Phoumi reiterated his government's policy: the RLG was determined to retain these posts in order to balance the power of the other two parties in the proposed coalition and would maintain this position "at all costs" at Geneva. If US aid were withdrawn, the Lao people would "struggle to survive and live completely independent lives in the future." Phoumi charged Souvanna with the failure of the Vientiane talks (see items 27 and 27-30 December 1961) and insisted that Souvanna should have relinquished his mandate to form a government at that time.

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Sarit avoided meeting Boun Oum and Phoumi during their Bangkok stopover because he wished to avoid implicating Thailand in the RLG's intransigent stand. While in Bangkok, the RLG leaders again mentioned the possibility of forming a "King's government" after a royal revocation of Souvanna's mandate. Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government was now looking into the possibilities of this solution.

If this "King's government" scheme failed, Boun Oum and Phoumi declared themselves ready to move into southern Laos and establish there a government, independent of US aid if necessary. The Thai were reported extremely concerned over being dragged into this "Southern venture" and feared the possibilities of being involved in hostilities without US support. Recognizing that their relations with the US far outweighed any Lao political maneuvering in importance, the Thai were anxious to seek a compromise over Lao internal difficulties.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1002, 15 Jan 62; 1010, 16 Jan 62.

14-18  
Jan 62

At Harriman's suggestion, US, UK, French, and Canadian delegates formed a task force at Geneva that met throughout this period to discuss the possible alternative solution proposed by Ambassador Brown on 9 January (see item), involving a government divided among three centers: Souvanna at Luang Prabang, Phoumi at Vientiane, and Souphanouvong at Khang Khay. The reaction was "decidedly negative." All three Allies of the US condemned the proposal as simply preparing the way for a Laotian partition, since the conflicting FAR and PL forces would remain unintegrated while their political counterparts could be expected to score substantial successes in the forthcoming election, each in its own area. Thus the Right and Left would solidify their power at the expense of the neutralist Center under Souvanna.

Various alternative possibilities for a Laotian settlement were then explored. These were: 1) an entirely neutralist government under Souvanna; 2) a government under the King with three Deputy Prime Ministers; 3) outright partition or a confederation loosely grouping the territories of the three factions; and 4) a continuation of the present Laotian situation. All were rejected as being either unrealistic and impractical in light of the current tense situation, or else as being essentially an acceptance of the status quo. The task force therefore concluded that the

only feasible course to pursue was the continuation of the current effort toward a carefully balanced coalition government under Souvanna.

The UK representative then suggested that Phoumi might be influenced to enter into serious negotiations if the Western Ambassadors in Vientiane should begin ostentatiously to develop a "new power combination" on the Right, composed of Phoui Sananikone and the leading FAR generals. The US, French, and Canadian representatives had certain hesitations regarding this gambit but finally agreed to recommend it, although the US representative privately urged the Department of State not to adopt it.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1044, 16 Jan 62; CONFE 1050, 18 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 The Consul General in Hong Kong reported that the Chinese Communist news agency had announced the signing in Khang Khay on 13 January of air transport and highway agreements between the Chinese Communists and the "Kingdom of Laos" (the Souvanna "government"). Under the highway agreement the Chinese Communists engaged to build a road from the Yunnan border to Phong Saly. The air pact provided that air transport companies appointed by both sides would conduct flights, scheduled or irregular, on agreed air routes.

In commenting on this event the Consul General noted that the preliminary agreement on the highway construction project had been reached during Souvanna's visit to Peiping in April 1961. He thought it of interest, however, that both the current agreements and the one of March 1961 regarding a Chinese Communist economic and cultural mission to Laos had been announced while Souvanna was out of the country. He surmised that the aim was to lessen the appearance of involvement by Souvanna with the Chinese Communists. To the Consul General the agreements indicated an increasing Chinese Communist stake in Laos, and he saw in the by-passing of North Viet Nam a determination to enhance Chinese Communist capacity to act independently of both Hanoi and Moscow.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 744, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin reported to the Secretary of State that an officer of the American Embassy had raised with the Viet Nam Desk Officer of the French Foreign Office the question of Lao recognition of both North and South Viet Nam. The desk officer stated that Souvanna had indicated that he had hopes for full relations with both North and South Viet Nam. Manac'h had added that the French Foreign Office would consider what could be done to alter the Prince's views, but he believed that the Government of South Viet Nam would have to accept a compromise.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3454, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 Harriman reported on a conversation with Pushkin at Geneva in which the latter once again called for a plenary session involving the three Princes (Harriman remained silent regarding this), while optimistically stating that the Princes should be able to reach an agreement in five or six days. Harriman countered that such a view was unrealistic.



He informed Pushkin that, while the United States would not dictate policy to a sovereign state such as Laos, pressure would be exerted if needed and he would expect Soviet assistance in restraining any offensive action by Pathet Lao forces, as Sullivan had previously explained (see item 7 January 1962).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1039, 15 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 During a lengthy discussion with UK representatives at Geneva, Boun Oum and especially Phoumi expressed the strongest opposition to relinquishing control of the Defense and Interior Ministries. Phoumi repeatedly opposed Souvanna as Prime Minister, proposing instead that the King receive this post and Souvanna become Minister of Defense. Statements by the UK representatives that this idea was "utterly non-negotiable" had no effect whatever as Phoumi appeared (according to the UK diplomats) to be "obsessed with [his] own power."

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1054, 18 Jan 62.

15 Jan 62 During a discussion of the recent US letter to Prime Minister Sarit (see item 12 January 1962), Foreign Minister Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government was in agreement with the US on objectives in SEA and had appreciated recent US assurances. US-Thai difficulties arose, however, over the means applied to achieve these objectives in Laos. The crux of the US-Thai differences was their disparate evaluation of Souvanna, his intentions and capabilities. Although long suspicious of Souvanna, the Thai Government had come a long way toward accepting him as Prime Minister of a coalition subject to adequate checks and balances. To give him the Defense and Interior posts without insuring a compensatory balance, however, would be demanding the "suicide" of the RLG. Souvanna had no strength or organization to oppose the Communists or win an election, the Thai believed, even if the US was right in thinking he did really desire neutrality. Moreover, the Thai emphasized that Souvanna had never publicly expressed the views that had so impressed the US with his anti-Communist and anti-Pathet Lao leanings. If Souvanna were to express these views publicly, Thailand might "hedge" somewhat on Souvanna.

Thanat also asked again how the US would retrieve the situation if the Souvanna coalition failed. Coalition under Souvanna could turn out to be worse for Thailand and South Viet Nam than the current uneasy circumstances, he claimed, and the Thai were convinced that the Communists would win the elections sooner or later. They did not feel the US had adequately answered their questions regarding checks and balances in a coalition government and "retrievability."

Thanat also reintroduced the idea of having the Lao King act as chief executive, at least for a temporary period. He acknowledged the Communists would not accept this plan except perhaps under pressure from all sides. Nevertheless, he felt the King's gambit would be feasible, despite Communist opposition, if the Western powers, the Soviet Union, and "Thai neighbors" all united behind it as an expedient to avoid an impasse or breakup of negotiations.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1009, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Harriman reported on a conversation with Souvanna at Geneva, in which the former made the following points: 1) Souvanna was assured that the United States wished to support him as Prime Minister of a neutral and independent Laos; 2) the United States favored neutralists receiving the Defense and Interior portfolios and had so informed Phoumi, Boun Oum, and Pushkin; 3) the United States also supported a formula for distribution of cabinet portfolios by which the Pathet Lao would not receive any vital posts and would be evenly balanced by the supporters of Phoumi and Boun Oum, while the neutralist factions controlled a majority of the posts; and 4) Phoumi had been warned that US support would be withdrawn if he either did not negotiate in good faith or launched an attack.

While asking Souvanna for suggestions on how to get Boun Oum to negotiate, Harriman pointed out the danger that overly-drastic measures against the RLG might "impair the balance of forces," and thus weaken Souvanna's position.

Souvanna "appeared to agree." He suggested that US logistical support be denied to the FAR and insisted that the Pathet Lao would not take advantage of the situation. He had warned his own and PL commanders that if they attacked during his absence he would not return to Laos. Souvanna asserted that RLG strategy was to force him to turn in his mandate to the King; the RLG would then call for US assistance in combatting the Pathet Lao.

Harriman urged Souvanna not to become discouraged, authorized him to mention US backing on the Defense-Interior question, and asked him to propose a definite list of cabinet ministers, which would aid the United States in pressuring Boun Oum.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1043, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 At a Geneva press conference held by Khamphan Panya, a cousin of Boun Oum and a high RLG official, it was announced that Boun Oum would not accept the invitation of the Co-Chairmen to address a plenary session, on the ground that the presence of the other Princes would give them a degree of recognition that constituted an infringement on the sovereignty of the RLG.

In response to questions, Khamphan denied that US aid had ever been used to exert pressure on the RLG, but stated that, should aid be terminated, it "would be natural for countries in the area sharing the same point of view as the RLG to come to its assistance." Discussions might take place in Geneva, he continued, but only in Laos itself could a binding agreement be concluded, and this in turn would be possible only if the RLG was given the Defense and Interior Ministries. He also announced that Boun Oum, "for family and other reasons," had to return to Laos by 21 January, barely five days later.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1045, 16 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Ambassador Young received instructions to deliver a letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit concerning US economic aid to Thailand. The President commented at length on the results of Dr. Howard Bowen's economic



mission to Thailand, characterizing it as a "new and improved basis" for joint cooperation in the economic development of Thailand. The President also detailed several specific proposals for expanded US aid efforts in Thailand. He informed Sarit that the US had approved the recent Thai loan application and was ready to begin several Thai irrigation projects immediately.

(On 19 January, the Ambassador reported that the President's letter had been delivered to Sarit.)

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1006, 16 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1042, 19 Jan 62.

16 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State a conversation with Pote Sarasin, the Secretary General of SEATO. Pote had assured Young "as categorically as he could" that Sarit was not encouraging Phoumi to resist US advice or break up the Lao negotiations. Since Sarit remained in general sympathy with Phoumi's views regarding Souvanna's neutrality and the question of the Defense and Interior posts, however, he could not be expected to contradict Phoumi on these matters.

Pote also discussed Thailand's major concern: its relationship with the US and its dependence on US support for its economic and military security. According to Pote, Sarit was deeply worried by the shift in US policy that saw the Americans now taking the lead from the British and French in the attempt to put Souvanna in power and "avoid any kind of hostilities in Laos at any price." Sarit was still more troubled when he looked to the future. He foresaw that some day when Thailand was threatened or attacked, the British and French might try to get the US to act in a similar fashion, watering down its commitments to Thailand if fulfilling them would risk US military involvement. Pote concluded that, notwithstanding Sarit's deep personal distrust of Souvanna, the more the US explained its position to Sarit and assured him regarding Thai security, the better chance it would have for working out political details on Laos.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1010, 16 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 During a return call on Harriman in Geneva, Souvanna stated that: 1) he had not yet been able to arrange a meeting with Boun Oum; 2) he was prepared to discuss matters with Phoumi, should Boun Oum leave Geneva, provided Phoumi had full powers; 3) he was ready to include demobilization of the armies, a problem whose great importance he recognized, in the Lao declaration of neutrality; 4) all matters referred to in the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961), but not dealt with in the Conference Protocol, would be mentioned in the Declaration of Neutrality; 5) he was much concerned about the recent remark by Khamphan Panya (see item 16 January 1962) implying that the RLG might turn to Thailand (Harriman stated that success in this was doubtful) if US aid should be cut off; 6) he recognized that Sarit feared a Communist Laos, as he did himself, but felt that the partition advocated by Sarit was no real solution, since Communist pressure would only be shifted to the new boundaries; and 7) Thailand should therefore support his policy of a

neutral Laos, and he in turn would give a "categoric assurance" that Laos would "cause no trouble of any kind" among the Lao-speaking tribesmen of northeastern Thailand.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1049, 17 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 Concerned by an increasing concentration of Pathet Lao-Kong Le-Viet Minh forces in and round Mahaxay, only about 25 miles east of Thakhek (headquarters of Group Mobile 14), RLG military authorities set in motion a series of defensive sweeps by elements of GM 14 and GM 12 aimed at forestalling any PL move against Thakhek. A reconnaissance patrol of the 8th Infantry Battalion (GM-14) in an engagement with an enemy squad lost one man killed and one man wounded. In support of the operations, three T-6 aircraft conducted air strikes. MAAG representatives, investigating reports that Thailand had offered bombs and fuses to the FAR Air Force, reported the strong probability that bombs had been employed on at least one of the air missions.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 171618Z Jan 62, DA IN 193939; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 181515Z Jan 62, DA IN 194573; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 172143Z Jan 62, DA IN 193647; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1051, 27 Jan 62.

17 Jan 62 Referring to missions flown by FAR T-6 aircraft in support of recent ground operations, the JCS reminded CINCPAC and CHMAAG Laos that under the policy established by the JCS in August 1961 T-6 aircraft should be used only against Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces which in violation of the cease-fire were conducting operations against FAR-Meo forces, and that reports of air missions must contain a specific statement whether or not the enemy forces were violating the cease-fire.

The JCS directed CHMAAG to find some way of curbing such air missions if they were not in accord with the policy.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC and CHMAAG Laos, JCS 2940, 172254Z Jan 62.

18 Jan 62 During a forthright session with Phoumi and Boun Oum at Geneva, Ambassador Brown informed them that the President wished a peaceful settlement in Laos; this could only be achieved through a coalition government (to include Phoumi and his followers) under Souvanna, with the Defense and Interior Ministries in neutralist hands. Brown countered Phoumi's continued objections by stating that "it would be very hard on the country," and on the RLG armed forces as well, if the United States was "unable to continue its support." Phoumi exploded angrily that Brown was threatening him and that "one should never threaten an Asian." Brown apparently succeeded in placating Phoumi, who stated that the "new" understanding he had just gained of the US position faced him with a "very difficult decision." Brown also appealed directly to Boun Oum, urging him "to consider his heavy responsibilities to his people and not to cast away the structure of international guarantees now available to his country nor to deny it US support."

Later in the day, Harriman informed Boun Oum and Phoumi of US disappointment that discussions among the three Princes had not yet begun, warned that the formation of a government was not a purely internal question, as Boun Oum claimed, but was vital in ending a civil war involving international elements, and urged that Phoumi continue discussions should Boun Oum have to return to Laso for family reasons. Harriman continued by stating that US aid "had been given to Laos and not to Phoumi or any other individual." Phoumi replied by agreeing to stay at Geneva beyond the meeting that afternoon with the Princes, should this be necessary, and hinted at some concession by stating that some positive results might be expected from their meeting. Harriman then addressed Phoumi directly and with emphasis, stating that "'you are a Lao for whom we have great respect. We hope that you, yourself, have a good future as well as your country.'" He was obviously relieved and gratified by this expression."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1055, 18 Jan 62.

18 Jan 62

After two days of intensified pressure by the US, UK, and other delegations, Boun Oum and Phoumi met for the first time at Geneva with the other Princes and the Co-Chairmen; various advisers were also present. Previous attempts by Souvanna to arrange such a meeting had been blocked by Boun Oum's insistence that Souvanna come to him "'if he has anything to say.'"

During the session, Souphaouvong and Souvanna readily accepted the draft Protocol to the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos, but Phoumi reversed the conciliatory impression he had just given Harriman (see previous item) by objecting to Article 5, which dealt with the French presence in Laos, asserting that this was a purely domestic affair to be handled later in the Laotian Neutrality Declaration; he also expressed reservations (unspecified) over Article 9, which commissioned the ICC to "supervise and control" the cease-fire.

The Co-Chairmen then withdrew to enable talks to begin on Laotian internal matters, but Phoumi scotched these by insisting that such discussion could only take place in Laos. (Souvanna and Souphanouvong had categorically rejected this idea at a private luncheon earlier in the day, saying that the Geneva meeting was the last opportunity to discuss a coalition government.) The meeting then adjourned.

During the reception that followed, the leading delegations present expressed acute disappointment regarding the meeting. Pushkin spoke to Sullivan and Harriman in most excitable terms, fervently denouncing Phoumi's actions and predicting they would result in a renewal of fighting in Laos. He charged further that RLG forces were violating the cease-fire and that Chinese Nationalist troops also were involved. Harriman disputed these assertions, but Pushkin refused to be placated. Ambassador Brown reproached Phoumi and insisted that a further meeting of the Princes be scheduled for the following day; Phoumi reluctantly accepted.

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1052, CONFE 1057, 18 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1058, 19 Jan 62.

18 Jan 62     Commenting from Geneva on the series of questions recently posed from Bangkok by Ambassador Young (see items 9, 15 January 1962), Assistant Secretary Harriman briefly reviewed the US position. To avoid either abandoning Laos to Communism or having to introduce American troops with or without the participation of SEATO allies, the United States had chosen the middle course of arranging a cease-fire followed by negotiations for a unified, neutral, and independent Laos. Over the months a better basic agreement had been worked out at Geneva than some had thought possible. Its most encouraging feature was the undertaking of the Soviet Union to police the Communist Bloc's observance of the agreement (when finally in force), including the provision that Lao territory would not be used as a corridor for activities against other countries, such as South Viet Nam. "We believe it is risk worth taking to hold Soviets responsible for closing this corridor. Khrushchev's personal good faith is attached to it."

Harriman observed that Sarit's opinion that Souvanna was "irretrievably sold out" to the Communists was not supported by evidence and that the United States and most other nations represented at Geneva were convinced that Souvanna did not wish to see Laos go to the Communists. Harriman declared that the United States had the right to expect Sarit, as an ally, "to cooperate with and not sabotage our policy." He noted that there was considerable evidence that word from Sarit had contributed to Phoumi's intransigence in demanding control of both the Defense and Interior Ministries, and that Phoumi's current stand was a refusal to negotiate at all. This raised a fundamental question of whether Phoumi could be allowed to dictate the military and political policies of the United States. "It is unthinkable," Harriman wrote, that "we should be led to a military action in Laos by Phoumi. This is the basic issue."

Harriman said that no detailed answer could be given at present to Sarit's question about US planning to retrieve the situation in Laos if the Souvanna government showed signs of succumbing to the Communists. The United States would of course continue to watch the situation closely, would attempt to strengthen the Souvanna government with political and economic assistance, and would try to deal with any unfavorable development. A key test would be the elections scheduled to be held after demobilization of the armed factions. Souvanna believed that the Pathet Lao could be defeated in the elections if the non-Communist groups could be brought to agree on a single candidate per district. Harriman observed that the future depended to a considerable extent on whether Laotians were willing to subordinate their personal political ambitions to preservation of their country's independence. The cooperation of the Thai Government in bringing about a favorable outcome would be "of real importance."

Harriman instructed Ambassador Young not to open discussion in Bangkok of the possible alternative solution described by Ambassador Brown on 9 January (see item),

involving a government under Souvanna at Luang Prabang with further administrative centers at Vientiane and Khang Khay. Exploration of this possibility was to be confined for the present to Geneva (see item 14-18 January 1962).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Bangkok, CONFE 1056, 18 Jan 62.

- 19 Jan 62 During a call on Phoumi at Geneva, Ambassador Brown continued to insist on the absolute necessity of the Princes reaching a detailed agreement at Geneva, while Phoumi spoke only in terms of an agreement on major problems and the development of a procedure for completing details in Laos itself, on the ground that "he had many people to consult" there. Brown bluntly contradicted this, asserting that whatever Phoumi and Boun Oum agreed to would be approved by their colleagues. Phoumi said that he would stay on in Geneva "for a few days" after Boun Oum's departure the following day.

Phoumi stated his intention of proposing that the question of the disposition of the Defense and Interior portfolios be postponed until he had seen how the other posts were allotted, a matter about which he intended to present several formulae to Souvanna at their meeting that afternoon. He indicated a certain softening in his position by stating, in reply to Brown's question, that negotiations were "not excluded" on the possibility of the Defense and Interior posts going to the neutralists. Brown expressed his pleasure at this remark, saying that disposition of the subsidiary posts in these Ministries were negotiable questions.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1065, 19 Jan 62.

- 19 Jan 62 The three Princes met in Geneva and then signed a "Joint Communique . . . on the Formation of a Government of National Unity in Laos," which was forwarded to the Co-Chairmen as a confidential document. It was not to be made public until Boun Oum had submitted his final position on the distribution of portfolios in the prospective government, following consultation with his colleagues in Vientiane. After commending the efforts of the Co-Chairmen and delegations at the Geneva Conference and unanimously approving "the good results achieved by the Conference," the Joint Communique continued as follows:

The three Princes consider it most necessary and urgent to form a Government of National Unity in Laos and to send a united delegation to the Geneva Conference to take part in its final stage and to sign the documents adopted at the Conference.

After a very friendly exchange of opinions on the formation of a Government of National Unity of Laos, the three Princes agreed on the following:-

1. The Government of National Unity of Laos will be formed on the basis of the joint communiques of Zurich and Hin Heup signed by the three Princes on June 22, 1961, and October 8, 1961, respectively.

2. The Government of National Unity of Laos will be composed of eighteen (18) members including one Prime Minister, two deputy Prime Ministers, nine ministers and six vice-ministers, divided between the three parties in the following way:
    - (a) For the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma
      - one Prime Minister with portfolio
      - seven ministers
      - two vice-ministers, making ten members in all.
    - (b) For the party of Prince Souphanouvong
      - one deputy-Prime Minister with portfolio
      - one minister
      - two vice-ministers, making four members in all.
    - (c) For the party of Prince Boun Oum:
      - one deputy Prime Minister with portfolio
      - one minister
      - two vice-ministers, making four members in all.
  3. As for the distribution of portfolios, the parties of Prince Souvanna Phouma and of Prince Souphanouvong feel that it is reasonable that the three key portfolios (National Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs) should go to the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma. The party of Prince Boun Oum feels that the portfolios of Defense and Interior should go to itself, and if that party did not obtain these two portfolios, it would choose two of the following portfolios:-
    - Foreign Affairs
    - Finance
    - Information and Press.
- The party of Prince Souphanouvong considers that it should have the portfolios of Economy and Information.
- In the view of these differences of opinion, it was decided to await a final reply from the party of Prince Boun Oum, which could not be expected until Prince Boun Oum had returned to Vientiane.
4. The party of Prince Souphanouvong considers that among the ten members of the party of Prince Souvanna Phouma the proportion should be seven from Xieng Khouang and three from outside Xieng Khouang; whereas the party of Prince Boun Oum considers that this proportion should be six to four. It was decided that Prince Souvanna Phouma would compose this difference as best he could.

5. The final distribution of portfolios will be made by Prince Souvanna Phouma, it was mutually agreed.

6. The list of candidates for membership of the Government from each party will be presented to Prince Souvanna Phouma by the leader of each party.

(C) Msgs, SecState to Geneva, FECON 732, 22 Jan 62; Geneva to SecState, CONF A-25, 24 Jan 62.

19 Jan 62

Referring to the JCS admonition against offensive air operations (see item 17 January 1962) and to instructions from CINCPAC to impress upon RLG authorities the importance of not violating the cease-fire, CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that on numerous occasions he had personally presented the US policy to General Phoumi. The RLG, in the opinion of CHMAAG, had "done rather well in walking the narrow path between improving their position throughout the country and not laying themselves open to charges of cease-fire violations." In absence of a specific cease-fire agreement, he reported, violations were a matter of opinion and not readily identifiable except for attacks on population centers clearly held by either side at the beginning of the cease-fire. "Low key" combat operations had continuously seethed back and forth over most of the country since May 1961, he continued. The FAR aircraft strikes had been directed against enemy concentrations in non-urban areas, enemy attacks, and enemy counter-action to FAR sweeps. Taking the foregoing into account, he believed General Phoumi had not been "wholly unresponsive" except for the possible use of bombs reported in the Mahaxay operations. In this connection, he thought the only "positive hold" would be to deny the FAR all T-6 armament or otherwise withdraw vital support for these aircraft, measures that he did not recommend at this time.

CHMAAG further reported, after a discussion with the Acting Minister of Security, General Bounleut, that he had received assurances that the RLG recognized the importance the US attached to the subject. He was "relatively confident" that Thailand had provided the RLG with bombs and in his discussion with General Bounleut he stressed the adverse effect of employing bombs at this time. CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that he would be in Bangkok the next day, to discuss with the US Ambassador and military representatives measures for cutting off the supply of bombs from Thailand.

(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 194054, 18 Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 182211Z Jan 62; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 194258, 19 Jan 62.

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Ambassador Brown reported from Geneva that he had protested to General Phoumi against the use of bombs by T-6 aircraft. Confirming that the bombs had been obtained from Thailand, General Phoumi agreed to instruct Acting Minister of Security Bounleut to stop the use of bombs. Ambassador Brown, on his part, instructed CHMAAG Laos to make a strong protest to Bounleut and, if the FAR Air Force did not immediately cease to employ bombs, to make every effort to ground the planes by withholding all technical support, servicing, spare parts, training advice, etc.

(TS) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Vientiane, 714, 19 Jan 62.



19 Jan 62     The RLG announced a reorganization of the Ministry of National Security (MNS) and of the National Army Command (CAN-the FAR operational or field forces command). [See chart below].

According to CHMAAG Laos, whose letter describing the reorganization was received by the JCS on 6 March, the most significant elements of the reorganization were the following:

1. The National Army Command (CAN) was redesignated the National Security Forces Command (FSN). The FSN retained all former CAN functions and the same commander, General Bounleut. It would be under the direct control of the Minister of National Security, Phoumi, and it would relocate its headquarters from Luang Prabang to Vientiane as soon as possible.

2. A Directorate of Military Budget was created and placed directly under Phoumi. This move would "streamline" the FAR financial and comptroller functions by placing them in one organization for the first time.

3. Under Phoumi's Chief of Staff, General Ouan, the MNS staff had gained the following divisions:

a. General Affairs. The conduct of the cease-fire negotiations would be the principal activity of this division.

b. Intelligence. Formerly, intelligence collection and dissemination had been the responsibility of the Directorate of National Coordination (DNC), another agency within the MNS. The separation of the DNC staffs from FAR staffs at the national, regional, and operational levels had precluded timely intelligence actions. Now, with a G-2 in the MNS staff and a G-2 in the FSN staff, the RLG was establishing, for the first time, a "true military intelligence system."

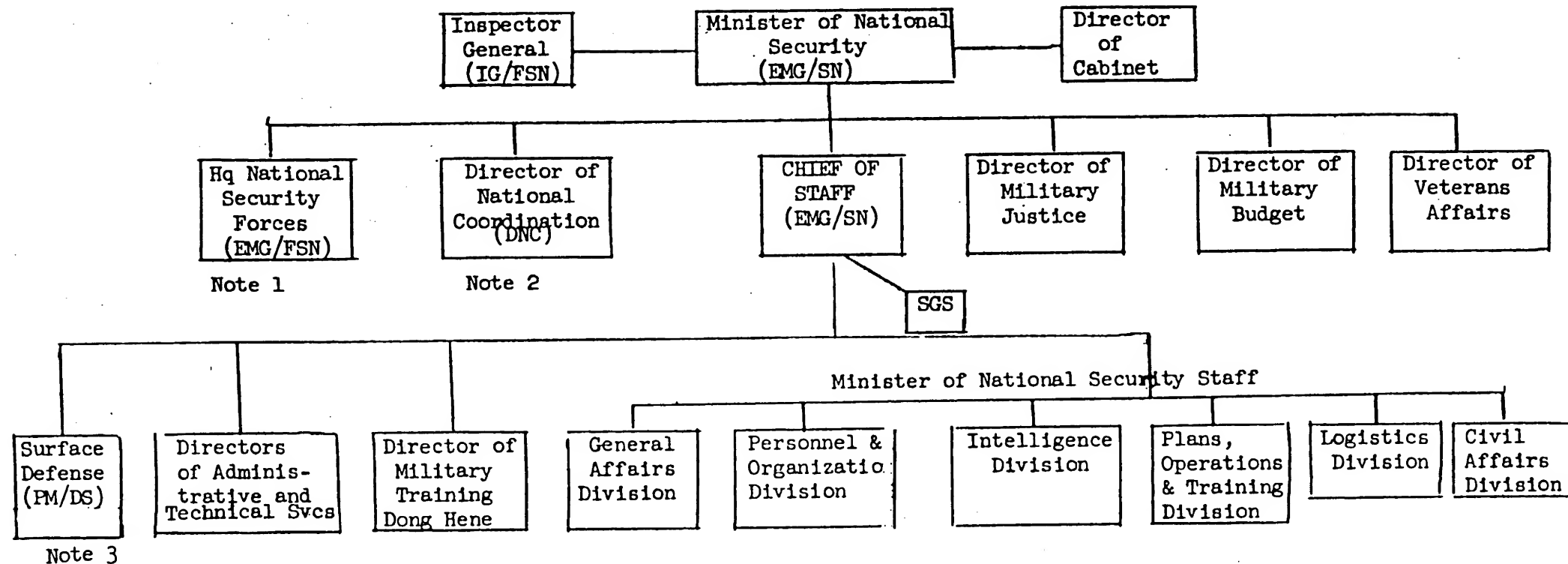
c. Civil Affairs. Except for a DNC psychological warfare section that had not effectively coordinated with the FAR, there had formerly been no civil affairs, psychological warfare, or troop information activities in the MNS.

4. Attached to the MNS and under the Chief of Staff, but not part of the MNS staff, were: (1) the Surface Defense Command (DS), under General Bounpone, controlling the regional ADC and volunteer units; (2) the Directorates of Administrative and Technical Services; and (3) the Directorate of Military Training. Regarding the first two of the above elements, CHMAAG commented that, in the unlikely event that Phoumi actually gave General Ouan freedom to operate them, Phoumi would be freed of much of the administrative detail that currently occupied his attention.

The creation of the Directorate of Military Training could be the "most significant development in the entire reorganization," CHMAAG reported. General Oudone would



**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY  
REORGANIZATION OF 19 JANUARY 1962**



- Note 1 - National Security Forces (Infantry Bns, GM Hqs, and Combat Arms: Arty, Armored, River Flotilla, Air Force) Service Troops & PsyWar Bn elements assigned to FSN by MNS according to operational needs and missions.
- Note 2 - DNC Hq & Security Forces Vientiane, Regional DNC Commands.
- Note 3 - Regional Forces (Volunteer Battalions and ADCs).

command this directorate, thereby controlling the entire FAR training effort.

5. The reorganization eliminated both the clandestine Army Command (see item 2 September 1961) and a "Combined Staff" originally formed to coordinate planning with the US, South Viet Nam, and Thailand.

6. The reorganization did not create a Logistics Command or otherwise strengthen and centralize FAR logistics, despite CINCPAC's advice to Phoumi that this be done (see item 1 July 1961).

CHMAAG reported that the Ministry of National Security had requested MAAG assistance in establishing missions and functions for several offices involved in the reorganization. The MAAG was performing the tasks, hoping thus to be able to help shape the entire structure of the MNS. At the same time, MAAG representatives would continue trying to convince Phoumi that the FAR logistical command system should be changed.

(See item 30 March 1962.)

(C) JCS 2344/37, 9 Mar 62; JMF 9155.2/9101 (6 Mar 62).

19 Jan 62

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna's offer to give Thailand "categorical assurances" of his intentions in the Lao-Thai border area (see item 17 January 1962) was interesting and encouraging if some way could be found for Souvanna to convey these views to Sarit in a convincing manner. Foreign Minister Thanat had suggested that Souvanna make a public statement regarding his purpose in winning the election and preventing a Communist take-over of Laos (see item 15 January 1962), but Ambassador Young had replied that such a public declaration was impractical during the negotiating period. Young, however, wondered if some sort of assurance via an appropriate private non-American channel might help convince the Thai. In view of the "massive distrust" between Sarit and Souvanna, the US would have to consider carefully what would constitute the best channel, if indeed the suggestion was at all feasible.

Ambassador Young also observed that the news of a Chinese Communist agreement to build a road from the Yunnan border to Phong Saly (see item 15 January 1962) would heighten the general Thai suspicion of Souvanna and strengthen their belief that the Communists were already effectively partitioning Laos by military, economic, and diplomatic actions. While Thailand favored an indefinite continuation of the present de facto division of Laos, they would officially shrink from suggesting or sanctioning a formal Lao partition. What the Thai really desired was a "genuine neutral buffer" beyond their Mekong border.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1042, 19 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62

Ambassador Brown called on Phoumi and Boun Oum at Geneva to hear their account of the signing of the Joint Communiqué by the three Princes the previous day (see item 19 January 1962). He was told that Boun Oum had said he would consider conceding Defense and Interior to the center faction if he

could have a choice of two from among the Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information Ministries. Souphanouvong claimed Information and Economy, and Souvanna wanted Foreign Affairs assigned to the center. When Brown asked Phoumi if he now accepted the proposition that Defense and Interior could not be held by either the right or left wing, Phoumi replied that he still had reservations about allotting the two posts to Souvanna but would not oppose it if his Vientiane colleagues, after hearing his explanation of the "international aspects of the problem," were prepared to yield. He countered Brown's remark that any advice given by Phoumi and Boun Oum would certainly be accepted by saying only that "he would see what he could do."

Concerning further meetings of the Princes and thus the implementation of the communique, Phoumi said that Souvanna had the prerogative of fixing a date (as yet unspecified) for such a meeting at Luang Prabang.

Harriman then joined the conversation. He urged Phoumi to convince Sarit during his passage through Bangkok on the return journey of the US interest in protecting both Thai and Lao interests. He also stated explicitly that the projected Lao government would receive US economic and financial aid and full support in defeating the Communists in the subsequent elections.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1072, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 Harriman evaluated the accord just reached by the Princes at Geneva (see item 19 January 1962) as representing "positive progress" and a "realistic framework" for a Laotian settlement. Pointing out that the major question of the disposition of the Defense and Interior posts remained unsettled, he reported that Boun Oum and Phoumi had informed the US delegation that the Princes had agreed to accept the King's decision on this issue. Harriman stated that US policy should be to see to it that this proviso was a face-saving device for an RLG surrender rather than a new obstacle to a settlement. He also asserted that the other important offices must go to Vientiane neutrals, who should be of high quality. Mentioning that Ambassador Brown was returning to Vientiane on 21 January, he emphasized the importance of Sarit's being prevented "from exercising a negative influence on Phoumi."

Harriman restated this warning in a message in which he instructed Ambassador Young in Bangkok to see Sarit at once to assure that the advice given Phoumi during the latter's stopover in Bangkok would be "constructive." Harriman was particularly concerned that Sarit should not encourage Phoumi's intransigence on the Defense and Interior question, and stated decisively that the "US has every reason to expect Sarit's cooperation."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState for action Bangkok, CONF 1067, 20 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1066, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 In order to provide British Foreign Secretary Lord Home with the latest US thought on the application of sanctions to impel the RLG toward agreement on a coalition government, MacDonald met with Harriman and Ambassador Brown at Geneva. MacDonald reiterated the British position that the pressure

of sanctions should be applied at once, to have its effect on the negotiations among the Lao factions currently in progress; sanctions should consist of halting the US airlift and delivery of POL supplies and the withdrawal of certain MAAG personnel, especially from FAR headquarters. Harriman in turn restated the US policy that sanctions should not be used unless and until Boun Oum and Phoumi caused a rupture of the negotiations, and then not until Souvanna had proposed a satisfactory cabinet and Pushkin had agreed to restrain the Pathet Lao (see item 7 January 1962). MacDonald agreed to try to influence Pushkin on the latter point.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1068, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 In a conversation at Geneva with Harriman and Brown, Souvanna stated that he was encouraged by the Joint Communiqué (see item 19 January 1962). He said that Phoumi had made an important concession in considering the possibility of neutralist Defense and Interior Ministers, provided the RLG faction secured two from among the Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information portfolios. Souvanna agreed that Phoumi's reserve regarding a final decision was justifiable if he was really sincere about consulting his followers in Laos.

Souphanouvong had asked for the Information Ministry. This prompted Souvanna to believe it should go to the center and that Quinim should continue in it. Harriman agreed regarding disposition of the post, and then emphasized that those cabinet posts of importance in influencing the election should not fall to Souphanouvong's MLX. Souvanna assured Harriman that "this would cause no difficulty." He asked in turn that the US and other Ambassadors in Laos pressure Phoumi to yield quickly concerning the Interior and Defense posts.

Harriman replied by urging Souvanna to try to strike a balance between the conflicting proposals advanced by Souphanouvong and Boun Oum concerning the number of Vientiane neutrals in the projected cabinet (see item 19 January 1962). An equitable solution to this problem, Harriman continued, would aid the US Government in mobilizing "US public support" for Souvanna's government.

Souvanna said "he had heard" that US officers were coming to Muong Sai to rally FAR forces, and asked Brown to prevent any FAR attacks. Harriman and Brown joined to assure Souvanna that the MAAG had strict orders to prevent any offensive.

Souvanna concluded by stating that he would return to Laos about 27-28 January and would then consult with the RLG to arrange a date for a meeting of the Princes.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1073, 21 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported that the FAR 8th Infantry Battalion, engaged in the sweep towards Mahaxay, had been counterattacked during the morning of 18 January by elements of one North Vietnamese battalion with two 105-mm howitzers and three armored cars and had been dispersed. As in the case at Muong Sai, the FAR troops made what appeared

to be only a token resistance and then withdrew. The enemy, seemingly content to blunt the FAR operation, made no attempt to follow.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, JCS, et al., DA IN 195000, 20 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196366, 25 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 Ambassador Young advised the Secretary of State that in his judgment, Ambassador Brown's tri-cornered plan for Laos (see item 9 January 1962) was worth serious consideration, particularly since Thailand would consider it an attractive alternative to the present US policy. The Ambassador realized that the plan would be seriously considered only if the present policy of achieving a coalition government had to be abandoned. Should that occur, the Ambassador requested permission to inform Sarit of the plan before it was bruited about. To help ameliorate the present strained relations between the US and Thailand over Laos, such prior consultation would help make Sarit believe that the US wanted his aid (as in fact it did) in solving the Lao problem. This could lead to a Thai commitment to a course of action in Laos that the US supported, the Ambassador noted, in contrast to the present Thai position of remaining critical of US policies without facing up to the actual available alternatives.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1046, 20 Jan 62.

20 Jan 62 The US, UK, French, and Canadian drafting group at Geneva (see item 10 January 1962) prepared an outline cease-fire proclamation which would be available for presentation to Souvanna when circumstances seemed auspicious. It stated:

#### OUTLINE OF PROCLAMATION

1. Note existence of de facto cease-fire.
2. To ensure continued existence of the cease-fire, proclamation would make arrangements concerning the following matters inter alia:
  - (A) Order all parties to refrain from taking any action which might lead to resumption of hostilities.
  - (B) Prohibition on troop reinforcements.
  - (C) Separation of troops.
  - (D) Regrouping of troops.
  - (E) Unification of the armed forces into a single national army.
  - (F) Demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of the single national army.
  - (G) Disposition of excess war material and elimination of mines and booby traps.
  - (H) Release of all political prisoners and detainees.

(I) Prohibition of reprisals and discrimination against persons or organizations for activities during hostilities.

3. The carrying out of cease fire arrangements.

(A) Establishment of appropriate machinery for carrying out the arrangements.

(B) Provision for the issuance of detailed implementing regulations to be incorporated in the arrangements.

(C) Understanding that the international commission for supervision and control would assist the RLG in carrying out the arrangements.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1091, 23 Jan 62.

21 Jan 62 MacDonald informed the US, French, and Canadian delegations at Geneva of renewed Soviet proposals for a plenary session, whose alleged purpose would be to hear a report by the Co-Chairmen on the results of their consultations with the Princes regarding the various Conference documents. Sullivan felt that a plenary would simply provide an opportunity for Chinese Communist propaganda and would also embarrass the French by revealing RLG criticism of their military presence in Laos (see item 18 January 1962). He therefore opposed the plenary proposal, although less vigorously than in the past (see item 12 January 1962), since the recent agreement between the Princes had lessened the danger of friction arising from propaganda speeches.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1076, 22 Jan 62.

21 Jan 62 Ambassador Young met with Phoumi and Boun Oum--both in Bangkok on a short layover--and Prime Minister Sarit. During their lengthy discussion Phoumi argued vigorously, with Sarit's support and encouragement, against the Souvanna coalition and US policy in Laos. Phoumi explained that in his conversations with Souvanna at Geneva he had not offered to surrender the Defense and Interior posts but merely hoped to show his reasonableness by offering to consider other views. Moreover, he did not intend to surrender the posts. In this position he received Sarit's full support. They asked Ambassador Young if President Kennedy had sufficient information to understand the real situation in Laos and whether the present US policy was indeed the President's. The Ambassador replied, "in three languages," that it was. Phoumi described his dilemma as follows: either he must surrender Laos to the Communists by agreeing with the West, or lose all US support by refusing to surrender.

Sarit then proposed that the only resort left was for the King to form a government and head it himself. Sarit silenced Phoumi's objections to this plan and asked him to consider it for a few days. Before leaving the meeting, Phoumi again pleaded with Young to convey to the President his fears and views.

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Later, in a private conversation with Young, Sarit was vehement in stressing the danger of the Lao crisis to Thailand: "If the US is wrong in Laos, Thailand is finished. We cannot afford mistake or regret." Sarit also mentioned the mounting pressure in Thailand for closer ties with the Soviet bloc. So far Sarit had resisted these pressures.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1047, 21 Jan 62.

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While the 8th Infantry Battalion was being regrouped and reorganized after its rout near Mahaxay, a move in the direction of the area from which it had withdrawn was undertaken by the 9th Infantry Battalion and 11th Parachute Battalion. This was in conjunction with a sweep to the north of Mahaxay by the 24th Infantry Battalion of Group Mobile 12. In an encounter with an enemy unit near Ban Na Kay on 22 January the 24th Battalion lost 2 men killed and one wounded and was forced to withdraw. The other two battalions apparently stopped short of their objective without making contact with the enemy.

In northern Laos, the outlying defenses of Nam Tha, headquarters of Group Mobile 11, had for several days been under sporadic shellfire. On 21 January, enemy forces estimated at two companies each attacked two defensive positions of the 1st Infantry Battalion near Ban Na Mo, about 19 miles east of Nam Tha, and overran the defenses. In the following two days the battalion was dispersed. The 2nd Infantry Battalion, on a defensive sweep in the vicinity, was outflanked and likewise forced to withdraw into Nam Tha. The enemy forces advanced to within ten miles of the city and emplaced artillery on the high ground overlooking the Nam Tha airfield.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 195613, 22 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 195967-S, 23 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 196572, 25 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196305, 25 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62

A draft "Statement on the Neutrality of Laos by the Royal Laotian Government," produced by the US, UK, France, and Canadian drafting group (see item 10 January 1962), was reviewed by the delegations of the four Western powers at Geneva. Presentation of the draft Statement to Souvanna was postponed until circumstances appeared more propitious, since it was feared that Quinim might pass on the text to "unfriendly" delegations. A general outline of the Statement was therefore prepared for use by the French in their discussions with Souvanna in Paris.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1091, 23 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62

Before leaving the Geneva Conference for Paris (and thence to Laos), Souvanna gave a press conference at which he expressed guarded optimism about the progress toward ultimate agreement on a coalition government, said that

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he expected a unified Lao delegation to return to Geneva early in February, remarked that he expected the King to intervene if necessary to further a final agreement, and concluded by treating rather lightly the press reports of renewed Laotian fighting. Souvanna asserted that his forces could not be responsible for this outbreak, since he had explicitly prohibited all offensive operations on their part.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1085, 22 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62 Phoumi "stated flatly" to John Hasey, a US Embassy official, that the RLG had not changed its position on the allocation of the Defense and Interior posts in a coalition government as a result of the Geneva meetings. Phoumi claimed he had only been maneuvering to sound out Souvanna's true position when he had said at Geneva that if the RLG gave up Defense and Interior it would have to receive its choice of two of the following three posts: Foreign Affairs, Information, and Finance (see item 19 January 1962). Souvanna had immediately claimed Foreign Affairs for his group, and Souphanouvong had demanded Information. In a separate conversation, Boun Oum also had told Hasey that the RLG had not ceded Defense and Interior at Geneva.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1025, 22 Jan 62.

22 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State suggested to Ambassador Brown that he present to Phoumi the US view that his refusal to concede Defense and Interior to Souvanna, especially as expressed during the meeting with Sarit (see item 21 January 1962), was an "unbelievable and shocking exhibition of duplicity" in the light of the signed, unpublished Geneva communique (see item 19 January 1962). The State Department was searching for means of bringing Phoumi into line without substantially depleting right-wing strength and was thinking of making it known privately to the King and all responsible Lao officials that the United States could no longer work with Boun Oum and Phoumi or support them as individuals. It was hoped that this declaration, given credibility by such measures as direct US payment of RLG troops, by-passing Phoumi, would induce other Lao leaders to use their influence to bring about coalition government under Souvanna. (For Ambassador Brown's comments, see item 27 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 639, 22 Jan 62.

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From Washington, Harriman instructed Ambassador Gavin in Paris to attempt to follow up on the indication given by Phoumi at Geneva that he was willing to consider conceding Defense and Interior to the center faction in return for control of two of three other key ministries (see items 19 and 20 January 1962). Harriman instructed Gavin to try to obtain an agreement from Souvanna that Ambassador Brown might inform Phoumi that the RLG could control Foreign Affairs and either Finance or another ministry equally as satisfactory. The allocation of these portfolios, however, would depend upon the acceptability of the individuals nominated. This proposed solution would then be discussed at Luang Prabang by representatives of the three factions.



Mr. Harriman, for Ambassador Gavin's information, explained that Phoumi had complained that Souvanna refused to give him any assurances regarding the posts of Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Information. Souvanna, because both Phoumi and Souphanouvong were seeking the Information portfolio, had decided that this post should be reserved for the neutral group or made an adjunct of the Prime Minister's office. On the other hand, Souvanna did not consider Foreign Affairs to be a vital post. The third portfolio, Finance, was considered important by Mr. Harriman, who urged that the RLG, if given the post, either select an able Minister or a particularly effective Secretary of State for Finance. Gavin was not to inform Souvanna of the interview in Bangkok (see item 21 January 1962) during which Phoumi had refused to surrender the posts of Interior and Defense and Sarit had told Ambassador Young that the only solution was a government headed by the King.

On 24 January, Gavin inquired of Souvanna concerning the possible control of Foreign Affairs and Finance by Phoumi's adherents. The Prince promptly reserved Foreign Affairs for the center group, justifying his decision on the grounds that both Souvanna and Souphanouvong had claimed this post as well as that of Information. When asked if Phoumi were aware of this plan, Souvanna "hedged," saying only that Phoumi knew that Souphanouvong wanted the post. In any event, the Prince continued, Foreign Affairs would be insignificant, since the Geneva Protocol would leave the kingdom scant initiative in the field of foreign relations. Phoumi should instead seek a post of domestic importance, such as Education, Youth, or Cults. As for Finance, Souvanna accepted Leum Rajasombath, who was not one of Phoumi's nominees.

Souvanna also spurned a suggestion that he show consideration for the difficult situation faced by Phoumi and Boun Oum. He accused the two men of seeking personal aggrandizement at the expense of the national interest and charged that Phoumi, after seizing control of the armed forces and the police, was now attempting to manipulate the veterans' groups in order to concentrate economic power in his hands. The vehemence of this outburst impressed American Embassy officers.

The Prince, although upset by reports of an FAR offensive in the Mahaxay area, did not deny RLG statements that three Viet Minh soldiers had been captured. The story, he said, might well be true, since he could not at this time control the Viet Minh.

Souvanna also "took several swipes at Thailand," claiming that the Thai Government was suppressing the nationalistic ambitions of the Lao minority in northeast Thailand and concealing the purpose of this campaign by branding the Lao involved as Communists. The Prince recalled the Thai blockade of 1960 and pointed out that this incident had "taught him the value of trade outlets in many directions."

An officer of the American Embassy inquired if the Chinese Communists, as reports indicated, would build a road to Phong Saly (see item 15 January 1962). Souvanna acknowledged that they would and also said that a Chinese Consul resided at Phong Saly. The Prince added, however, that his coalition would govern from Luang Prabang rather than from Phong Saly or Vientiane.

In answer to questions about the police and gendarmerie, Souvanna indicated that the police would be under the Minister of Interior, who would place them at the disposal of local authorities. The gendarmerie would be a military police organization within the Ministry of Defense.

Gavin also inquired about the Americans held prisoner in Laos. Souvanna, after noting that the Pathet Lao and not the forces of Kong Le had captured the Americans, expressed hope that Grant Wolfkill, a newsman, would soon be released. The remaining Americans, "military prisoners," would be released after the formation of his government.

The Prince stated that he intended to leave Paris on Saturday, 27 January. He would stay for one day in Rangoon and reach Laos on Tuesday. Thus, although Phoumi's group had made statements to the contrary, there could be no meeting between Boun Oum and Souvanna on Monday at Luang Prabang.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 3961, 22 Jan 62; Paris to SecState, 3585, 24 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 The European edition of the NY Herald Tribune featured prominently a UPI dispatch from Vientiane, dated 22 January, that began, "The Royal Laotian Army said today it has thrown thousands of men into a battle near Mahaxay in an attempt to cut off a rebel supply line leading to Communist North Vietnam." The news account referred to the battle as an RLG "offensive." From Geneva, Sullivan expressed concern about the probable impact of this and other recent news reports of military action in Laos on the plenary session of the Conference scheduled for that afternoon.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1087, 23 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 A member of the RLG delegation at Geneva informed the US delegation in confidence that Boun Oum and Phoumi were determined not to relinquish the Defense and Interior Ministries to "non-Vientiane types." In an effort to win international support for this position, members of the RLG delegation were returning home by various routes that would allow them to consult with delegations at the United Nations, anti-Administration political circles in the United States, and the Japanese, South Korean, Chinese Nationalist, and Philippine Governments, as well as others (only the United Kingdom was specifically mentioned).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1088, 23 Jan 62.

23 Jan 62 Co-Chairman MacDonald opened a plenary session of the Geneva Conference by reporting on the recent discussions and accords among the three Princes, stressing the positive accomplishments without glossing over the differences still existing. (Since the Joint Communiqué was still

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confidential, he did not set forth its terms in detail; see item 19 January 1962.) He appealed to the delegates for restraint in their public statements, in order to preserve a favorable atmosphere for further progress.

Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin expressed general agreement with MacDonald but added an extended attack on Boun Oum and Phoumi, placing the blame for all delays and disagreements entirely on them. He concluded by intimating that the United States shared in the responsibility for the recent military operations in Laos through its support of the FAR. Quinim followed, pointing out that disposition of the key cabinet posts was still unresolved. He urged Boun Oum to act cooperatively, especially by halting military operations, and said that the diplomats in Vientiane, particularly Ambassador Brown, would now have to help in settling the Laotian question.

These relatively moderate speeches concluded, the delegates of the Souphanouvong party, North Viet Nam, and Communist China launched a succession of virulent attacks on the RLG and particularly the United States. They asserted that the agreement reached by the three Princes at Geneva was a "US-sponsored fraud" designed to delay a settlement so that the "US interventionists" could "test military formations recently created in SEATO countries." The Chinese Communist delegate described the reports of US pressure being applied to Boun Oum and Phoumi as a "deliberately concocted fairy tale"; rather than furthering a solution, the US was stalling one in the hope of gaining a superior military position and thereby attaining a pro-American coalition government. Among other things, the Chinese Communist delegate reaffirmed that SEATO protection of Laos must be abrogated, and he declared that the agreed Conference documents could not be changed to incorporate the "absurd" US proposals regarding control of the reintegration of Lao armed forces. Like the other Communist speakers, he charged that US-backed RLG forces were launching large-scale attacks in Laos.

After a more temperate speech by the Polish delegate, who merely intimated that US support was an element in the RLG intransigence, Sullivan replied to the attacks on US policy. He questioned the motives of anyone who called the agreement a fraud and urged those truly interested in solving the Laotian problem not to disparage or undercut the agreements already reached. Stating that the US delegation had no reliable information concerning the recent military operations in Laos, he said that the ICC should be called upon to investigate any suspected violations of the cease-fire. Sullivan then addressed the Chinese Communist delegate directly, suggesting that he should "tell his leaders when he went back to China that the US and the Soviet Union had no intention of fighting a war on CPR behalf in Laos."

This remark was rejected by Pushkin, who exercised his privilege as a Co-Chairman to interrupt the order of speakers to make a reply. He stated categorically that the USSR and Communist China shared an "absolutely identical" position on Laos and that any "speculative attempt" by US spokesmen to encourage differences between the two was

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destined to failure. In a private conversation later, Pushkin told Sullivan that public allusions by US officials to Soviet-Chinese Communist differences "only complicated matters" and urged him "as a friend" not to do it again.

After conciliatory speeches by the delegates of South Viet Nam and India, MacDonald proposed that it be left to the Co-Chairmen to decide on what date in early February the next plenary session should be held, bearing in mind that a united Lao delegation appointed by a coalition government was expected to attend. The Conference agreed.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1090, 23 Jan 62;  
(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1099, 25 Jan 62; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1101, 26 Jan 62.

23, 24  
Jan 62

Ambassador Young delivered a personal letter from the President to the Thai Prime Minister in an effort to convince Sarit that he must urge Phoumi to accept the neutralist government concept for Laos. The President explained once again the necessity for supporting the Souvanna solution, and asked Sarit to counsel Phoumi "to move forward promptly and in good faith with the remaining steps for the formation of a government of national union." The President emphasized the importance of the assurance given by the Soviet Union at Geneva that it would accept responsibility for seeing that the terms of the agreement were respected by the Communist parties involved. Although the West must be cautious, the President continued, he was convinced that for reasons of its own which might in part be related to the situation within the Communist Bloc, the USSR was serious about the responsibilities it would undertake under a Geneva agreement. "If the agreement is not respected, we will be in a position to hold the Soviets responsible. I assure you we fully intend to do so."

After one more round of arguments during which the Thai-US views were exchanged, Sarit told the Ambassador: "Okay, I agree and I don't agree but let's go ahead and try if that is what your President wants to do." Sarit barely suppressed his anger and frustration in this meeting, Young reported, but now seemed resigned to acquiescing in the President's policies.

Later that day in a meeting with Young on the same subject, Foreign Minister Thanat agreed with most of the Kennedy letter but wished to make certain "elaborations." Among these Thanat mentioned: the Thai Government believed that the problem was not so much the USSR, but what the Chinese and Viet Minh would do in Laos to take over the country whatever the USSR might say. Moreover, it would be surrendering Laos to Communism to give Souvanna the Defense and Interior posts. Thailand would accept Souvanna as Prime Minister but would like to suggest that the Defense and Interior posts be given to other capable neutrals.

The next day, during yet another conversation with Ambassador Young, Sarit dictated the following radio message to Phoumi: "I am sympathetic with you because I know this may mean death for you but it looks like you will have to give in and hope for the best in the future."

While not the strongest possible endorsement of the US position nor correct encouragement to Phoumi, Ambassador Young commented, this message represented a considerable retreat for Sarit. (For later indications that this message was not actually dispatched, see items 25 and 28 January 1962.)

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1043, 20 Jan 62; (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1075, 1085, 23 Jan 62; 1066, 24 Jan 62.

24 Jan 62 CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to plan for the withdrawal of MAAG personnel and US equipment from Laos, using the assumption of a phase-out covering two to three months. CHMAAG should consult CHJUSMAG Thailand to insure the "orderly movement of people and things" into Thailand and to ascertain CHJUSMAG's capability to absorb MAAG Laos personnel and equipment, either permanently or temporarily. In the same message, CINCPAC reaffirmed the authorization for CHMAAG to plan the withdrawal of MAP materiel that would be excess to the needs of the FAR as reconstituted under a coalition government (see item 14 December 1961).

(On 30 January CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that consultations held before receipt of the above directive had indicated that "CHJUSMAG Thailand not in position to absorb significant numbers of MAAG Laos personnel whereas CHMAAG SVietNam is.")

(For further withdrawal planning, see items 14 February and 2 and 12 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 240420Z Jan 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 197867, 30 Jan 62.

24 Jan 62



(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1066, 24 Jan 62.

24 Jan 62 CINCPAC reported to the JCS that recent Communist activities in Laos and Thailand had strengthened his earlier impression of probable Communist plans and programs in Southeast Asia (see item 23 December 1961). The Communists probably believed, CINCPAC said, that the US would force the RLG to accept a coalition government headed by Souvanna, and that they would be able eventually to dominate such a government.

CINOPAC also thought that the Communists had recently assigned a higher priority to Thailand and were attempting to subvert it simultaneously with Laos and South Viet Nam.

The Viet Minh had accelerated their subversive activities in northeast Thailand, CINCPAC said. Communist political and military cadres from Thailand were evidently receiving training and direct support from Pathet Lao centers in Laos. Furthermore, the Viet Minh now had an advance base in the Mahaxay-Nhommarath area, from which to move personnel and equipment into Thailand. In the event of a political settlement in Laos, additional large quantities of weapons, now used by the Pathet Lao, would be freed for use in Thailand.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 240411Z Jan 62.

25 Jan 62 Phoumi informed Hasey that he had consulted all his colleagues and they remained adamant that the Phoumi group should fill the portfolios of Defense and Interior in a government of national union. According to Phoumi, the King agreed with this position even if it meant the loss of US support. His Majesty was ready, however, to act as umpire in disputes among the three Princes with regard to these posts. The King, according to Phoumi, had refused to take the place of Boun Oum as Premier of a broader and more representative government unless the new government took into consideration the other two Princes. He was reportedly unwilling to deal with Souvanna and Souphanouvong as equals.

Phoumi, however, expressed the hope that a meeting of the three Princes would take place at Luang Prabang, but it could not be on 29 January, as forecast. Because of administrative problems, a meeting could not be held until a week or 10 days after Souvanna indicated he was returning to Laos.

During the conversation with Hasey, Phoumi asked with some feeling if the United States could not support him in claiming the Defense Ministry while assigning Interior to the Souvanna faction. "If I could only express my views to President Kennedy," he said. If convinced that the President and Secretary Rusk understood his position, he would listen to their views and guarantee to reach a compromise settlement.

The information available to Ambassador Brown on 25 January strongly indicated that no messages from Sarit had been received by Phoumi since the meeting of the two in Bangkok on 21 January (see item).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1041, 25 Jan 62; 1042, 26 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown recommended to the Secretary of State that the February cash grant aid for Laotian civil and military budget support be deposited within the next few days. Withholding the cash grant, said Brown, would lead to inflation, increased corruption and profiteering, and to a disruption of the RLG fiscal structure that might cause grave difficulties for a Souvanna government when ultimately established. At the same time, withholding the grant would not induce Phoumi to accept US proposals for a neutral government in the near future; the RLG's suspension of convertability and preparations to improve exchange controls indicated a determination to hold out for a long period.



To make the deposit, however, would probably encourage Phoumi in the belief that he had "put something over" on the US at Geneva and could be interpreted by the Soviets and by powers friendly to the US as a lack of determination to support Souvanna. These impressions could readily be dispelled by withholding military deliveries, but Brown understood the US policy to be not to take this step until Phoumi's intention to sabotage the negotiations for a neutral government became unmistakable and the US obtained assurances from the Soviets that they would restrain the Communist forces in Laos. On balance the Ambassador recommended making the February payment, with appropriate explanations to US allies. (See item 26 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1037, 25 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62

Ambassador Ronning, head of the Canadian delegation at Geneva, passed on to the US delegation the gist of a conversation with Souphanouvong, with the latter's tacit understanding. Souphanouvong had expressed concern about the military situation in Laos, citing the reports of fighting near Mahaxay (see item 23 January 1962) and a purported build-up by RLG forces in the Tha Thom-Paksane region and near Muong Sai as well. Despite Ronning's arguments to the contrary, Souphanouvong apparently continued to believe that MAAG officers were deeply involved in these operations. He implied that, in the two months remaining until the rainy season began, Phoumi might well begin major offensive operations. Souphanouvong was to leave Geneva on 26 January 1962 for Laos.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1098, 25 Jan 62.

25 Jan 62

[REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC, the Department of Defense, and the JCS that the recruiting and organizing of Kha resistance forces were progressing so well that authorization was required to support more than the 300 Kha presently being armed (see item 11, 13 January 1962). The US officials estimated that six ADCs could be formed in the Bolovens Plateau, and that several additional units could be formed farther to the north and east. They therefore requested that approval be given to the arming of 900 additional Kha in the same manner as the first 300. A Kha force of 1,200 could have a "significant impact" upon Viet Cong lines of communication in eastern Laos (whereas, CHMAAG [REDACTED] had reported three days earlier, the Kha presently under arms would form only a base from which a successful interdiction operation might be launched).

(On 31 January, [REDACTED] CHMAAG repeated the above recommendation, stating that 400 Kha had now been equipped and were in training. On 6 February, CINCPAC put his endorsement upon the proposed expansion to 1,200 armed Kha.) (See items 2 and 6 March 1962.)

(S)

[REDACTED]  
CINCPAC to JCS, 060303Z Feb 62.

25 Jan 62

CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that the failure of recent FAR operations in the Nam Beng valley, in the Mahaxay area, and in the neighborhood of Nam Tha warranted a new look at the military situation. In the past three months, CHMAAG

reported, there had been a marked build-up of Viet Minh forces in Laos. Despite his knowledge of the enemy build-up and in the face of warnings by his American advisors, General Phoumi had ordered the FAR to exert pressure on the enemy near Muong Sai, Tha Thom and Mahaxay, which had triggered sharp enemy reaction and resulted in complete rout of the FAR forces involved. CHMAAG stated that he was less disturbed by the failure of the FAR, which in view of the Viet Minh reinforcement was predictable, than by the fact that FAR commanders and troops had been ready to break and run at the first indication of Viet Minh presence. He believed the following conclusions could be drawn: 1) that the enemy, having little confidence in Pathet Lao-Kong Le troops, had been augmenting its forces with regular Viet Minh units and using them in combat when necessary; 2) that the Lao, both officers and men, had "an almost pathological fear" of Viet Minh forces, which, if it were to be overcome at all, could only be surmounted by developing FAR capabilities and confidence over a period of years; 3) that in spite of improvements, the FAR regular forces continued to have serious weaknesses especially in leadership and motivation. (See item 27 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196366, 25 Jan 62.

26 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, in view of Phoumi's apparent intention to postpone the Luang Prabang meeting and his unwillingness to agree that Souvanna should control the Defense and Interior Ministries in a coalition government (see item 25 January 1962), deposit of the February cash grant should be deferred.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 662, 26 Jan 62.

26 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown forwarded to the State Department a "limited country team estimate" of Viet Minh strength in Laos, prepared at his request by MAAG, ARMA, [REDACTED]. According to this estimate, an equivalent of at least 12 North Vietnamese infantry battalions, of about 450 men each, were serving in Laos. In addition to these combat units, totalling about 5,400 men, there were 3,000 to 4,500 North Vietnamese in service units and cadres, or acting as technicians and advisors for Kong Le and Pathet Lao units. The higher figure, according to the estimate, was probably the more accurate. Total Viet Minh strength in Laos ranged, therefore, from 8,800 to 10,000 men, with the probability favoring the upper limit. In connection with the estimate, it was reported that a Viet Minh prisoner had stated that his battalion, prior to entering Laos from Dien Bien Phu in December, had been outfitted to resemble a Pathet Lao unit.

The Team estimate, Ambassador Brown commented, was in sharp contrast to denials by Souvanna and the Soviets that Viet Minn forces were present in Laos. The estimate, he concluded, should be considered along with the recent attack towards Nam Tha, in discussing the validity of Soviet assurances that they would police their side during the negotiations for a coalition government; it was also relevant in considering the risks of imposing military sanctions on Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState 1047, 26 Jan 62.



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- 26 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown reported that newsmen just returned from Nam Tha were filing dispatches stating that enemy forces heavily outnumbering the FAR were attacking Nam Tha from three directions. The civil population was being evacuated. MAAG personnel on the spot confirmed the advance by a substantial enemy force, which appeared capable of capturing Nam Tha in a few days. At the least, the enemy could readily occupy a dominating position in the surrounding hills. MAAG officers stated that there had been no movement by the FAR that would have justified this attack.  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1043, 26 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC and the JCS that the FAR troops in and around Nam Tha (Group Mobile 11) were in serious trouble and that the RLG planned to airlift the 30th Infantry Battalion, which had recently returned from six weeks of unit training in Thailand, from Pakse in southern Laos to Nam Tha beginning the following day. (The airlift of the 30th Infantry Battalion, together with three 75-mm pack howitzers from Camp Chinaimo, near Vientiane, was completed on 29 January.)  
(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196695, 26 Jan 62;  
(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 197363, 27 Jan 62; DA IN 197393, 28 Jan 62; (S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to [CINCPAC and JCS], DA IN 197728-S, 29 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that the American Embassy had expressed to a member of Souvanna's staff the "serious apprehension" felt by the US regarding the fighting at Nam Tha. A French Foreign Office official had stated that Souvanna, upon first learning of the action, had appeared "surprised and definitely dissatisfied."  
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3626, 26 Jan 62.
- 26 Jan 62 The State Department gave its approval to the draft Statement on Laotian Neutrality and the outline cease-fire proclamation prepared at Geneva (see items 20 and 22 January 1962). The Department stated that it considered the treatment in the cease-fire proclamation of the key questions of reprisals and private armies to be quite adequate. The Department assumed that inclusion of these questions in the draft indicated Souvanna's willingness to deal with them in a neutrality statement, and felt that their importance should be underscored through inclusion in the proclamation on cease-fire arrangements as well.  
(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 743, 26 Jan 62.
- 27 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, commenting on Souvanna's recent remarks concerning the Lao police force and gendarmerie (see item 22, 24 January 1962), informed the Secretary of State that the Prince's plan to assign the civilian police to the Ministry of Interior and the gendarmerie to the Ministry of Defense coincided with the opinions of Ryan and Deuve, the American and French police advisors who were conferring in Vientiane (see items 27 November and 14 December 1961). These two advisors had agreed that the gendarmerie should not be placed in the Ministry of Interior along with the police but should be constituted as a separate force, military in character, and with no power over civilians except under conditions of martial law.  
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1012, 17 Jan 62; 1050, 27 Jan 62.

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27 Jan 62

Commenting on the State Department message of 22 January (see item) that had spoken of Phoumi's refusal to give up Defense and Interior as deceitful in the light of the Geneva communique (see item 19 January 1962), Ambassador Brown said he did not believe the communique constituted a firm commitment by the RLG to yield Defense and Interior. Boun Oum's signature merely committed the RLG leaders to consult and reach a decision on whether they adhered to their original demand for the two portfolios or would choose from other specified cabinet posts.

Brown said he had made the US dissatisfaction with Phoumi's intransigence known to nine important Lao officials "without apparent result in changing their support of Phoumi's position." "We must not delude ourselves into thinking there exist here strong anti-Communist leaders who are willing or able to materially influence Phoumi's actions." As for the suggestion that the US might show its disfavor of Phoumi by by-passing him in order to pay the RLG troops directly, Brown was sure that Phoumi would never allow this, "particularly since he has for time being ample financial resources . . . even if we suspend financial aid."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1052, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

CINCPAC, referring to the concern expressed by CHMAAG Laos about recent FAR operations (see item 25 January 1962), reappraised his 9 January estimate of the situation (see item). The introduction of "substantial" Viet Minh forces in the past two months, CINCPAC reported, altered the power balance in favor of the enemy and to a large extent negated the improvement in FAR capabilities. CINCPAC considered the minimum Viet Minh strength to be 7,400 (5,000 combat and 2,400 advisors), with a maximum of 10,000 as a not unreasonable estimate. The Viet Minh forces in Laos, CINCPAC continued, could move rapidly and effectively to reinforce, or to take over from, Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces at most of the major fronts.

Along with the mounting scale of North Vietnamese intervention, CINCPAC called attention to a statement by a Soviet Embassy official in Vientiane denying that any Viet Minh were in Laos. In view of this patent falsehood, CINCPAC concluded, the US should carefully consider how much faith could be placed in the peaceful intentions professed by Soviet representatives in Geneva.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270348Z Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

Disturbed by CHMAAG's critical report of FAR operations (see item 25 January 1962), the State Department had queried Ambassador Brown about the reinforcement of Nam Tha reported on 26 January (see item). The State Department reminded the Ambassador that he had explicit instructions to restrain the RLG from provocative acts, even to the extent of withdrawing American aid if necessary for this purpose. The Ambassador was told that the State Department had not been previously informed that some of the FAR operations could be considered dangerously provocative and had not been approved by MAAG.

In his reply of this date, Ambassador Brown assured the State Department that the reinforcement of Nam Tha had his approval, in which CHMAAG concurred, as an action clearly necessary to protect the town against the enemy offensive, that General Phoumi had requested the ICC to intervene, and that there was hope of ICC action to calm down the situation. Referring to his own analysis of the military situation, despatched a few hours earlier, Ambassador Brown reiterated that the FAR operations had been essentially defensive in the face of a heavy enemy build up, except for a planned attack on Tha Thom and Ta Vieng in December 1961, which had been cancelled at his insistence (see item 14 December 1961); admittedly, the operations perhaps had not in all cases been soundly conceived from a military point of view.

As Ambassador Brown explained the situation, the enemy after the cease-fire agreement had concentrated large forces and introduced substantial North Vietnamese regular units in positions threatening key points held by the FAR. To be in a better position to react against any enemy attack, FAR units had been sent forward, but had withdrawn when attacked by the enemy. At Nam Tha, according to the Ambassador, the situation was simply an advance in force by the enemy against the town, which was defended by only a small garrison that had not been involved in any provocative act.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 663, 26 Jan 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1051 and 1053, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 CINCPAC, reporting on the Nam Tha situation to the JCS, did not entirely agree with Ambassador Brown's analysis (see previous item). The enemy action, according to CINCPAC, appeared to be following the pattern of the recent operations near Muong Sai and Mahaxay, where FAR sweep operations in areas not clearly held by either side had been successful to the point where they placed pressure on positions considered critical by the enemy, at which point the enemy had in each case counterattacked and driven the FAR force from the threatened area, but had not followed up the advantage. As part of the FAR sweep towards Muong Sai, a move had been made from the direction of Nam Tha, and "in this sense," according to CINCPAC, "FAR forces were carrying the battle to the enemy." As soon as the FAR forces in the Nam Beng valley had been routed, the enemy had turned its attention to the column approaching from Nam Tha, had routed it also, and was now within attacking distance of the lightly defended town. Although CHMAAG had reported to CINCPAC on 25 January that the enemy appeared to be making an all-out offensive effort that could result in the early capture of Nam Tha, CINCPAC was inclined to think that the enemy would be content with blunting the FAR sweep. The enemy could undoubtedly seize the town, he reported, if they chose to.

(S-NOFORN) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 196305, 25 Jan 62; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 270233Z Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to a request of July 1961 (see items 28 July and 15 November 1961) by the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for a plan under which the

Department of Defense would assume responsibility for Meo paramilitary operations in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreeing with CINCPAC's recommendation, did not consider it appropriate for the Department of Defense to assume responsibility for Meo Auto Defense de Choc (ADC) paramilitary operations under current conditions. They recognized the need for a concept for this contingency, however, and had obtained CINCPAC's views before developing one. In submitting it the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that "any actions taken in Laos must be considered in light of the over-all situation in Southeast Asia and must be in consonance with plans for the entire area which must include offensive actions, both overt and covert, in Laos and North Vietnam."

As the concept to be used if the Department of Defense was directed to assume responsibility for support of Meo operations the JCS recommended that: 1) CINCPAC organize a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF), or similar organization, to plan, coordinate, control, and support paramilitary operations in Laos by the Meo and, as appropriate, by FAR and third-country forces. 2) paramilitary forces and assets for Laos be employed in support of the JUWTF in accordance with established doctrine and policy. 3) Special programming and funding procedures be instituted to provide expeditious procurement and delivery of logistical support. In an appendix the JCS discussed in more detail the factors involved and the phasing necessary to accomplish the assumption of responsibility.

(TS) JCSM-61-62 for SecDef, "Contingency Planning for DOD Assumption of Responsibility for Support of Meo Operations (S)," 27 Jan 62, derived from (TS) JCS 2344/30, 18 Jan 62. JMF 9155.2/3100 (28 Jul 61).

27 Jan 62

According to a Vientiane radio broadcast, Boun Oum had sent Souvanna a telegram the previous day stating that he could not give a precise answer on the division of portfolios in a government of national union and expressing the hope that this question could be settled at the next meeting of the Princes at Luang Prabang.

Later in the day, Phoumi informed a US Embassy officer that he and Boun Oum would be glad to receive Souvanna at Luang Prabang on 2 February.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1054, 28 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1056, 28 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

Ambassador Young met with Prime Minister Sarit, Foreign Minister Thanat, and others to deliver the contents of two messages from the Acting Secretary of State. Young had been instructed to inform Sarit that the US considered he was entitled to the fullest possible assurances of US support for Thailand in case the formation of a neutral government under Souvanna resulted in an increased threat to Thai security. Therefore, if Sarit agreed to cooperate with the US in achieving a "Souvanna solution" in Laos, the Ambassador was authorized to tell Sarit (to be confirmed in writing if desired) that in event of Communist attack against Thailand, the US would give full effect to its obligations under Article IV (1) of the Manila Pact. The

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Thai Government should be reminded that commitment under this article was not conditioned on prior unanimous consent of all SEATO members and would be the fullest commitment the US could give Thailand.

Ambassador Young was also instructed to inform Sarit that the President was gratified at Sarit's promise to communicate with Phoumi, urging him to negotiate realistically, but the President was now astonished at reports from Vientiane that Phoumi was more intransigent than ever and was even contemplating postponement of the scheduled Luang Prabang meeting with Souvanna. Young was to tell Sarit of the President's confidence that "Sarit will follow through with Phoumi and see to it that Phoumi takes the desired action." Although he should not mention that the President was aware that a message opposite to the one promised had been sent to Phoumi, Ambassador Young could imply that the President could not believe that Phoumi would be so adamant if Sarit had really acted in good faith and sent the right message.

When the Ambassador presented these points, Sarit and Thanat expressed understanding for the President's concern and astonishment over Phoumi's intransigence, but they believed that the question of surrendering the major cabinet posts was "so much a matter of life or death for Phoumi" that they were not sure he would yield even to the best of arguments. Sarit urged the US to give Phoumi concrete assurances that he would receive support and assistance if, after the coalition government had been given a trial, it became clear that the Communists were taking over Laos. Sarit promised to attempt to persuade Phoumi in the light of such concrete assurances from the US. Ambassador Young was pessimistic concerning the amount of pressure Sarit would bring to bear on Phoumi or with what success Sarit's attempts would be crowned "unless the US could say something more on assurances."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1055, 23 Jan 62; 1084, 26 Jan 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1079, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 The Acting Secretary of State issued the following instructions to Ambassador Brown, to be carried out only if the discussions between Sarit and Phoumi (see previous item) failed to produce an agreement by Phoumi to "cooperate to our satisfaction." It had been concluded at the highest level of the US Government that, in that event, a showdown with Phoumi could no longer be deferred.

Ambassador Brown, at his scheduled meeting with Phoumi on 29 January, should first deliver to him a letter from President Kennedy that urged Phoumi to work with the United States in bringing about a peaceful settlement through the establishment of a government of national union, which the negotiations at Geneva had brought within reach. Phoumi, said the President's letter, had "a great responsibility for the future of Laos and . . . could contribute much now and in the future to the maintenance of Lao independence and sovereignty. I hope you will make it possible for us to work with you toward these objectives. I assure you that as long as you do so, you will have my unfailing support and friendship."

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Brown should then elaborate as follows:

1. As demonstrated by the letter he had just read, the advice previously given him by Harriman and Brown stemmed directly from the President's own position that Phoumi must make every effort to facilitate the formation of a government of national union under Souvanna. The achievement of this goal required the allocation of the Defense and Interior portfolios to the center group. The US would, of course, support Phoumi in obtaining two other important posts for his right-wing group. The US would also expect Phoumi to negotiate effectively on the remaining posts so that the composition of the cabinet would be acceptable.

2. Recent military operations had given incontrovertible proof of the FAR's military weakness as compared with the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh. Thus, since Phoumi could not win militarily, his only hope for his own future lay in the formation of a Souvanna government and in his participating in and cooperating fully with it. If he did so participate and cooperate, the US would continue to befriend him.

3. Unless Phoumi, within 24 hours, gave Brown "his solemn pledge" to negotiate in good faith, not to hold out for Defense and Interior, and to "press for earliest meeting [at] Luang Prabang with at least Souvanna, even if Souphanouvong does not attend," the United States would be unable any longer to regard Phoumi as a "man we can work with and will immediately break off contact with him." The King, the Prime Minister, and all other responsible Lao officials would be notified of this decision and advised that the situation presented a "grave obstacle to continued US/Lao cooperation." The reason for cutting off relations just with Phoumi rather than with the RLG was that the US did not wish to "penalize the Lao people for [the] self-seeking stubbornness of one of its leaders."

4. Phoumi must realize that US public opinion would not tolerate a military intervention by US forces, particularly now that a peaceful settlement was clearly possible.

The Ambassador was advised that if Phoumi forced the United States to break with him, the US objective would be to bring about a sufficient reorganization of the RLG to permit continued negotiations for the formation of a new government. Failing this, the US might have to apply sanctions and would not in any case make the February cash deposit until satisfied with developments.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 668, 669, 27 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62

At the request of the State Department, Soviet Charge Smirnovsky called on Assistant Secretary Harriman. After reviewing the US efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Lao problem, Harriman expressed the hope that the next meeting of the three Princes would enable the Lao factions to form a government of national union and send a united delegation, representing that government, to the Geneva Conference.



It was obviously essential, Harriman cautioned, that this favorable trend not be upset by military provocations from either side. The United States, disturbed by reports of the increasing number of incidents and countermoves by both sides, believed it was to the interest of all parties concerned that these activities be stopped, and that both the US and the USSR use their influence to keep the cease-fire intact. Harriman referred to the Sullivan-Pushkin conversation in Geneva (see item 7 January 1962), repeating the proposition that if the US found it necessary to increase pressure on the Boun Oum-Phoumi faction by withholding aid, thereby weakening the RLG militarily, the US would need assurances from the Soviets that they would make certain that the Pathet Lao did not take advantage of the situation by launching a military offensive against the RLG forces. Harriman noted that no indication of the position of the Soviet Government on this matter had yet been received.

Harriman also said that if the meetings between the three Princes were to be successful, all parties to the negotiations must display a spirit of give and take. Prince Souphanouvong had made no contribution to a reasonable spirit of negotiation; some of his public statements had been contentious and he had not attended several of the agreed-upon meetings. The US hoped, continued Harriman, that the Soviet Government would influence Souphanouvong to refrain from unhelpful statements and would urge him to negotiate with the other Princes in a spirit of compromise and good will.

(In Moscow, on 29 January, Ambassador Thompson "repeated virtually [the] entire representation" to Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov. In reply the latter did not go beyond saying that the Soviet Government was doing its utmost to achieve a successful conclusion to the negotiations, in accordance with the Khrushchev-Kennedy agreement reached at Vienna to establish Laos as a neutral country.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, 1758, 28 Jan 62; Moscow to SecState, 2075, 29 Jan 62.

27 Jan 62 The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Young that the US could not give general assurances concerning its course of action in Laos in the event a Souvanna government showed signs of failing, beyond the points already made by Harriman in this regard (see item 18 January 1962). Sarit might be informed, however, that the US was prepared to give personal assurances to Phoumi and his chief followers that in such an event they would be treated generously, provided that they cooperated in good faith in the present negotiations.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1088, 27 Jan 62.

28 Jan 62 The RLG delegation at Geneva circulated a note addressed to the Co-Chairmen the previous day that called attention to "dangerous aggravation" of the military situation by a Pathet Lao advance near Nam Tha and to the purported presence of Viet Minh Battalion 316, with Chinese and Russian elements, near Muong Sai and Parbeng. Condemning this as a violation of the cease-fire, the note urged that Co-Chairmen to ask the ICC (whom the RLG had already notified of the matter) to investigate at once, and also to inform the various Conference delegations of these events.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1103, 28 Jan 62.

28 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that the Thai were experiencing difficulty in arranging a meeting with Phoumi (see item 27 January 1962). It was possible, the Ambassador observed, that Phoumi would avoid meeting Sarit if he thought Sarit would not back him fully. In that event, there was little the US could do but press Sarit either to send Phoumi a "satisfactory" message or simply not to send adverse advice. Young warned the Department that Sarit and Thanat were having second thoughts over any meeting with Phoumi and were showing an inclination toward a neutral stand in the Lao situation, leaving the US to exert any pressures on Phoumi. Sarit had told Ambassador Young on 27 January that he was "fed up" talking about Laos and wanted to limit their conversations to Thailand. Sarit's message of 27 January to Phoumi reflected this change in view. Sarit had merely passed on the US message to Phoumi and counseled him to make up his own mind. Moreover, this was the only message sent to Phoumi during the last week; the message Sarit had dictated in the Ambassador's presence on 24 January had not gone out (see item 23, 24 January 1962). Ambassador Young suggested that US interests might be better served by encouraging Sarit to adopt a neutral silence rather than by continuing the attempt to induce him to send effective messages to Phoumi. The Ambassador requested guidance on whether he should encourage Thai neutrality.

Replying the same day, the Acting Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to continue pressing the Thai to get Phoumi to Bangkok or to send Phoumi a message, in terms much stronger than those of Sarit's 27 January message, urging him to cooperate in the Lao peace settlement. The US was planning "drastic and irrevocable" action against Phoumi if he failed to cooperate (see item 27 January 1962). Ambassador Young was instructed, if he considered it desirable, to inform Sarit of these intentions without going into great detail. The US considered it particularly important that Sarit tell Phoumi that he could not rely on Thai support if he broke with the US. Sarit might be "fed up" talking about Laos, the State Department added, but the US was likewise sorely tried by Sarit's encouraging Phoumi to defy US policy, particularly now that Sarit had received reassurances of US support (see item 27 January 1962).

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1082, 28 Jan 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1093, 28 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 In a meeting with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi stated that he and Boun Oum would be in Luang Prabang on 2 February and would be available for discussions with Souvanna if he wished them. Although he continued to regard it as absolutely essential that he retain some means of protecting the anti-Communist position, Phoumi was searching for a formula for composition of a government that would be broadly compatible with the agreement signed at Geneva (see item 19 January 1962). He professed to be having difficulty in inducing his cabinet colleagues to agree to any formula by which the Defense and Interior posts would be conceded to the center group in exchange for other important ministries. Cabinet discussions were to continue and would soon be



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influenced by the return of the five members of the government who had stopped to test sentiment in Washington, at the UN, and elsewhere on their way home from Geneva. (see item 23 January 1962).

Brown asked if he could inform the State Department that Phoumi had given his personal assurance that he was now working for a solution based on Defense and Interior in the center. Phoumi replied, "Not yet. Wait a few days."

Phoumi said he had received a message from Sarit on 27 January, telling him of the arguments the US had been using with Sarit and asking Phoumi to come to Bangkok for discussions. Phoumi had been unable to do so, and Sarit had then sent another message repeating almost completely the memorandum the US had given Sarit (see item 28 January 1962) and saying it might be best for Phoumi to follow the American advice.

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that Phoumi was "subdued and evidently somewhat shaken in his position, probably by Sarit's advice," but was not yet ready to give in. Brown had thought it best not to apply more severe pressure to Phoumi until there had been time for Sarit's message really to sink in and be conveyed to the cabinet.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1059, 29 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown explained the US position with regard to a neutral Laotian government to King Savang and urged the monarch to use his influence with Phoumi and Boun Oum to get them to agree that the Defense and Interior posts in such a government be held by the center group, provided they were satisfactorily manned and other portfolios were satisfactorily distributed and manned.

King Savang did not specifically agree to use his influence with regard to these ministries. After a long and rambling discourse he conceded that if Souvanna would agree that Defense and Interior should go to independent and responsible persons - not to Souvanna and Pheng Phongsavan - then Phoumi would have a basis for yielding these positions.

During the course of his remarks, the King referred indignantly to a proposal of Boun Oum's that the King take over power. He had refused to do so. Only if all negotiations broke down and fighting began again would he take power, if his people asked him to.

Ambassador Brown believed that the King understood but disagreed with the US position. He was little hope that the King would make any effort to induce Phoumi and Boun Oum to follow the US advice regarding assignment of the Defense and Interior Ministries.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1062, 29 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 While passing through Rangoon en route to Laos, Souvanna had a brief exchange with US Ambassador Everton. The latter transmitted a message to Souvanna, in which Harriman stated that Boun Oum and Phoumi were closer than in the past to

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relinquishing their claim to the Defense and Interior Ministries and urged Souvanna to respond generously in other areas of negotiations should they do so.

Souvanna countered that he had recently been informed by Boun Oum that the latter was still undecided on the question and that he could only "consider" it if he received two out of the three Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Information (see item 27 January 1962). However, Souphanouvong had asked for Information and had opposed the granting of Foreign Affairs and Finance to Boun Oum and Phoumi. Souvanna hoped to eliminate the problem by reserving these positions for his own group. (US officials were later informed that Souvanna had remarked that the Foreign Minister post was not important since he himself would determine foreign policy.)

To Harriman's expression of hope that Souphanouvong would attend the proposed meeting at Luang Prabang, Souvanna replied that he intended to see Boun Oum at Luang Prabang but that it would be better to confer separately with Souphanouvong, since a combined meeting might simply lead to friction. He could call such a meeting in the future, after the ground had been carefully prepared.

Everton also informed Souvanna that Harriman was extremely concerned by reports of new military activity in Laos. The United States was doing everything possible to restrain the FAR, and it was hoped that Souvanna "would do likewise." Souvanna stated that "insofar as he knew" no military build up was taking place. The supplies entering by road and air from North Viet Nam consisted of food stuffs, POL, and construction materials, not military equipment. (Souvanna later repeated these remarks, citing the absence of local supplies in the Xieng Khouang area, and his control of those imported, as the basis for his influence on the Pathet Lao forces.) Souvanna went on to state categorically that FAR units had launched attacks at various points, including Milsa and Mahaxay, that he had so informed the ICC and various diplomats, and that "obviously if attacks were made it would be necessary to resist them." Everton replied that the United States would be "seriously disturbed" if military action should upset progress toward a peaceful solution of the Laotian problem.

Souvanna spoke further on the Laotian situation at an informal dinner later in the day. He admitted that the Pathet Lao presented a great danger to the course he was attempting to follow, but he believed this was a problem with which the "Lao must deal themselves." Souvanna emphasized that a settlement must be reached soon if the new government was to have the support of the majority of the Lao people; if the present unsettled conditions persisted, the people would become alienated and more receptive to Communism. He spoke highly of Secretary Harriman and praised his statement (see item 16 January 1962) favoring the allocation of the Defense and Interior portfolios to Souvanna. Souvanna then said that if the United States really backed this statement, it could force agreement on

Boun Oum and Phoumi concerning the cabinet posts since they were "completely dependent" on US support. The objections of a US official to this remark led Souvanna to modify but not withdraw it. As to the current fighting at Nam Tha, Souvanna said that he had been asked for permission to attack the town before he had left for Geneva, but had refused. He assumed that the offensive had been provoked by Phoumi's attacks near Thakhek and Milsa.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Rangoon, 407, 27 Jan 62; Rangoon to SecState, 533, 29 Jan 62; (C) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 542, 30 Jan 62.

29 Jan 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that General Phoumi had sent a "scorching" reply to Sarit's request that he use moderation and accept the coalition government. Phoumi vowed that he would yield nothing and would fight on alone if the US withdrew its aid. As a result of this reply, Sarit had decided not to renew his invitation to Phoumi to come to Bangkok, and not to send General Wallop to Laos to confer with Phoumi. In fact, on the recommendation of his advisors, Sarit had decided to withdraw entirely from this "political matter," leaving the task of pressuring Phoumi to the US representatives in Laos. Ambassador Young advised the Secretary of State, however, that he would continue his efforts to gain Thai cooperation in inducing Phoumi to accept the US position.

(On the next day, Thanat told Ambassador Young that he still wanted General Wallop to meet with Phoumi in Laos and that he had carefully briefed the General on a point-by-point answer to Phoumi's message in the event Sarit agreed to send him. Thanat claimed that Phoumi's message had proved that he was not the Thai puppet that some people had assumed.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1089, 29 Jan 62; 1101, 31 Jan 62.

29,30  
Jan 62

Ambassador Brown replied to the Department's instruction to him of 27 January (see item) by pointing out that to cut off contact with Phoumi while continuing to support the RLG and FAR would have no effect on Phoumi; it would simply cut off the US from knowledge of what was going on. It was unrealistic, according to Brown, to try to distinguish between Phoumi and the RLG. Phoumi was the RLG; the other members were either for him or afraid of him. To break with Phoumi would, therefore, have little or no effect in bringing about a reorganization of the RLG. Brown thought that the only way to influence Phoumi was by applying really effective sanctions.

The State Department reply of 29 January indicated that Washington officials were unmoved by this argument, since they could not believe that "Lao politicians and military leaders are so devoted [to] Phoumi personally that if they saw he were completely cut off by US they would all follow him into personal and national disaster." In an additional comment referring to Brown's report of 26 January (see item) that had sharply up-graded the estimate of the number of Viet Minh troops in Laos, the State Department suggested that his concern that sanctions might

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weaken the FAR at a critical time was "not really relevant as FAR now clearly incapable stem PL/VM offensive. Incidentally Pushkin has constantly made it plain he would be responsible for holding back Communist side until agreement signed." (For a contrary indication by Harriman, see item 27 January 1962.)

Renewing his argument on 30 January, Ambassador Brown observed that by the time an agreement was signed, "Vietminh may well occupy further substantial portions [of] Laos. I had hoped that holding back should be reciprocal." On the main point he wrote, "I continue to feel that type of ultimatum proposed . . . will be ineffective because it really does nothing to Phoumi . . . and since no Lao (not to mention our allies and the Soviets) is going to feel Phoumi 'is completely cut off by U.S.' as long as we continue to furnish economic and military support to a government which he controls." Brown recommended that the President's letter, "which is calculated [to] appeal to Phoumi's amour propre and ambition as well as convey definite warning," be delivered on 31 January, but that the ultimate be withheld "until we have one with teeth."

In reply, the Secretary of State authorized Brown to present the President's letter to Phoumi, accompanied by points 1, 2, and 4 of the instructions of 27 January but omitting the 24-hour ultimatum contained in point 3.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1058, 29 Jan 62; 1063, 30 Jan 62; SecState to Vientiane, 676, 29 Jan 62; 678, 30 Jan 62.

29 Jan-  
2 Feb 62

The Geneva Conference lapsed into inactivity, as interest focused on the meeting scheduled to begin at Luang Prabang on 2 February 1962. Many delegates left Geneva, either temporarily or permanently.

During an informal meeting between the US, UK, French, and Canadian delegations on 1 February, at which recent developments were summarized and discussed, MacDonald referred to the impact of Sarit's messages to Phoumi, and commented that US influence had been "both decisive and timely in helping [to] resolve Thai doubts and hesitations."

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1109, 2 Feb 62.

30 Jan 62

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), William P. Bundy, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the President, before deciding to apply sanctions against Phoumi and the RLG, should have the benefit of a full discussion of the alternative suggested by Ambassador Brown and his Country Team (see item 9 January 1962): a coalition government under Souvanna at Luang Prabang, with two Deputy Prime Ministers, Phoumi and Souphanouvong, heading administrative centers at Vientiane and Khang Khay respectively. According to Bundy, current US policy in Laos had three objectives: to avoid the loss of Laos; to avoid committing US forces in Laos; and to establish, therefore, a neutral, independent Laos under Souvanna. This policy had several recognized risks, Bundy said. Souvanna might not be as sympathetic to the Free World as he appeared, and even if he were sympathetic he might not have the political power

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to free himself from Communist influence. Moreover, the Soviets might not be fully sincere in their professed intention to keep Laos neutral and to prevent its use as a corridor to South Viet Nam. Even if sincere, they might not have the necessary control over Communist China and North Viet Nam to carry out their intent.

Although the US was willing to accept these risks, the RLG was not. The RLG believed with some cause that acquiescence in a Souvanna government would be suicidal. The RLG was deeply disturbed by such factors as Souvanna's inability to muster substantial political backing and the several thousand Viet Minh troops dominating northern Laos. The RLG was also concerned that the US had thus far produced no concrete courses of action for use if, as was possible, Souvanna was unable to maintain effective neutrality and independence.

Against continued RLG refusal to accept the Western negotiating position, US policy provided only two alternatives to cease supporting the RLG and deal directly with Souvanna and other available Lao politicians; or to accede in Phoumi's request for continued support against Communist pressures. The Department of State would consider the latter alternative an "unacceptable backdown" to Phoumi and a failure to meet the US commitment of supporting Souvanna. Such a course would also probably result in continued hostilities. The former alternative would "most likely" result in the collapse of strong anti-Communist participation in a coalition government, thereby facilitating Communist domination of Laos.

None of the above results would achieve US policy objectives, Bundy continued. The Laos Country Team proposal appeared to offer some opportunity to do so. The proposal did have the many disadvantages listed by the Country Team, and it would probably be initially opposed by the UK and France. The Communist Bloc would certainly oppose vehemently but would probably accept the arrangement in the end, inasmuch as it reflected the realities of power in Laos. The US might, by exercising "great firmness," achieve the objective proposed by the Country Team. (For the discussion with US Allies that had already occurred, see item 14-18 January 1962.)

(TS) Memo, DepAsstSecDef (ISA) to SecDef, ISA Doc. No. I-25, 137/62, [30 Jan 62]; OSD (ISA) FER/SEA Br. Files.

31 Jan 62

By Special National Intelligence Estimate 58/1-62, the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) substantially modified its conclusions of 11 January (see item) regarding the relative capabilities of the opposing forces in Laos. Recalling that it had warned in its earlier estimate that improvements in the government forces' morale, motivation, and leadership had not been proven in combat, the USIB reported that military clashes during January (see items 11; 20; 21-24, and 26 January) had resulted each time in the withdrawal or dispersal of government troops.

In each engagement, the presence of Viet Minh troops among the enemy forces was suspected (the total number of Viet Minh troops in Laos now being estimated at 9,000, rather than the 5,000 assumed in the earlier SNIE), and the

government forces had shown themselves to be greatly afraid of the Viet Minh and unable to deal with any substantial number of them.

While the performances of the FAR units had not been as bad as some performances given immediately before the May 1961 cease-fire, they had nonetheless been bad enough for the USIB to conclude that the FAR was not the equal of the anti-government forces. The anti-government forces were now judged capable of maintaining their main forward positions and of conducting local operations to counter aggressive government moves. Without further reinforcements, the enemy could seize and hold certain key positions now held by government troops. Reinforced by additional Viet Minh combat troops, they could quickly overrun the remainder of Laos.

(S) SNIE 58/1-62, 31 Jan 62.

31 Jan 62 Ambassador Brown, acting on the Secretary of State's instructions of the previous day (see item 29, 30 January 1962), delivered the President's letter to Phoumi and presented points 1, 2 and 4 of the instructions of 27 January (see item). Phoumi replied that he was not yet able to say definitely whether he would be able to agree to a government of national union in which the Defense and Interior posts were held by members of Souvanna's center group. Phoumi claimed to be trying "to work for the best," taking into account the views of both the US and the "international attitude" favoring such a solution and the political parties in Vientiane that opposed it.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1071, 31 Jan 62.

31 Jan 62 The RLG delegation at Geneva, following up its previous submission (see item 28 January 1962), presented a note to the Conference Co-Chairman protesting the "serious aggression" in the Muong Sai and Parbeng areas by what it identified as "Viet Minh Battalion 316 reinforced by foreign elements." The note requested the Co-Chairmen to demand that the Viet Minh withdraw all troops from Lao territory at once and refrain from further aggressive acts. The RLG note also asked that the matter be brought to the attention of the Conference delegations.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1107, 2 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

As requested, the US Ambassador in Vientiane suggested to the Secretary of State a series of actions designed "to show our disgust here with Phoumi's behavior" and offered his evaluation of the effect of these measures. According to Ambassador Brown, the US could: 1) instruct all its personnel to cease contacts with Phoumi; 2) have the Ambassador deal only with Boun Oum or with ministers other than Phoumi; 3) tell King Savang of its conviction that Phoumi was blocking a peaceful solution, thus acting contrary to the best interests of both Laos and the US; and 4) inform the press of this boycott of Phoumi.

The Ambassador, however, doubted that such a boycott, whether merely threatened or actually imposed, would have any effect on Phoumi. He believed, moreover, that a US boycott of Phoumi would serve only to alienate the King, Boun Oum, and the Lao people in general. Merely to express disapproval of Phoumi's actions was not, in the Ambassador's opinion, enough to rally opposition to Phoumi. Instead, the US should, at the least, continue to withhold cash deposits and announce this policy. Military sanctions, the Ambassador believed, not only would be more effective but would be felt more keenly by Phoumi himself.

Although admittedly unable to state the official views of the British, French, and Australian Governments, Ambassador Brown predicted that, if asked, their Ambassadors at Vientiane would agree that a US boycott of Phoumi could not be effective and would recommend against joining in such a venture.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1076, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

At the request of the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law, called for a short talk on Laos. Harriman, noting that Phoumi had "apparently fallen back" from the position he had taken at Geneva, said that the US could not be sure what would happen at the forthcoming Phoumi-Souvanna meeting. The Assistant Secretary emphasized, however, that the President was determined to go through with the agreement reached in Geneva (see item 19 January 1962), if this were at all possible. Both the US and the USSR, he stressed, should be patient and make every effort to keep the Lao factions from fighting.

In the process of obtaining a peaceful settlement, Harriman pointed out, it might become necessary for the US to place sanctions on Phoumi that would weaken him militarily. The US could not do this, if there was a military threat from the other side.

Adzhubei's reply to Harriman's statement was non-committal, but he did voice his conviction that "no obstacle to accommodation in Laos existed."

(C) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1786, 1 Feb 62.



1 Feb 62 CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that Nam Tha airfield was being hit by enemy mortar fire. He considered this a definite violation of the cease-fire and perhaps of particular significance owing to its timing in relation to the scheduled resumption of negotiations between Souvanna and Phoumi in Luang Prabang the following day. (For Boun Oum's message to Souvanna canceling this meeting, see later item 1 February 1962.)

As early as 25 January three enemy guns, presumed to be 75-mm. cannon, had been observed in emplacements on the high ground east of the airfield. On 27-28 January, FAR positions were subjected to mortar fire. When the airlift of the 30th Infantry Battalion was completed, FAR forces planned an offensive to retake the heights round the city, and in preparation a series of T-6 strikes on enemy gun positions had been made on 30-31 January. However, the shelling of the airfield on 1 February forced the FAR commander to evacuate the T-6s to Luang Prabang and to give up the proposed offensive.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 197320, 26 Jan 62; DA IN 197728, 29 Jan 62; DA IN 200524-S, 7 Feb 62; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 198422, 1 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1124, 8 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62 As of this date US Army Special Forces in Laos, organized into 52 field teams, had a total of 432 personnel. In addition, there were 253 military personnel in MAAG, administering the Military Assistance Program.

(TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP #5-62, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62 CHMAAG Laos replied to a JCS request for an appraisal of the effect on the safety of US personnel and on the advisory effort of various sanctions that might be imposed on the RLG. He stated that any sanction would tend to undermine FAR-MAAG relationships, would result in at least minor harassment of the MAAG, and might endanger the safety of US personnel, particularly those with combat units. The types of sanctions he had considered were, in order of severity: 1) suspension of military supplies and financial support; 2) withdrawal of contract air support for the resupply of field troops, in addition to (1); 3) withdrawal of field teams from forward combat elements, in addition to (1) and (2); 4) suspension of the advisory effort of all levels, in addition to (1), (2) and (3). The temporary withholding of funds in January had resulted in coolness, and in one or two cases in ill-concealed hostility, on the part of FAR commanders at the Group Mobile and lower level. There was evidence also, CHMAAG reported, that concern had even spread to the Meos in the Plaine des Jarres area.

The more severe sanctions or the reapplication of the temporary suspension of funds would bring progressively quicker and more serious reactions, CHMAAG



pointed out. Danger to US personnel would arise chiefly from the possibility of offensive operations undertaken either by the FAR, in the realization of diminishing capabilities in the absence of US aid and in the hope of attracting support, or by the enemy, to take advantage of the weakened FAR. There was also the possibility of isolated cases of reprisals by FAR unit commanders against US field teams.

CHMAAG assured the JCS that, on the imposition of any new sanctions, he would remain alert to the necessity of withdrawing advisory teams from forward units. If a general withdrawal of field teams became necessary, he suggested they be returned to their home stations, as their continued presence in Laos might lead to serious friction. Emergency evacuation plans included not only US, but also Thai and Filipino personnel, CHMAAG continued. Timely notice of the impending imposition of severe sanctions would be necessary, he concluded, in order to ensure the safety of personnel.

(S) Msgs, JCS to CHMAAG Laos, JCS 3098, 30 Jan 62; CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 198730, 1 Feb 62.

1 Feb 62

Boun Oum requested the ICC to convey a message from him to Souvanna pointing out that the attack on Nam Tha was an obstacle to the projected meeting at Luang Prabang. The message asked Souvanna to withdraw his forces 15 kilometers from Nam Tha and stated that Souvanna's arrival at Luang Prabang "can not be contemplated until after this withdrawal."

Reporting that enemy fire against the Nam Tha airfield was continuing, Ambassador Brown advised the Secretary of State that he viewed Boun Oum's refusal to negotiate under enemy pressure with "considerable sympathy." He did not believe the issue was one on which the US should try to force the RLG to yield. Brown suggested instead that "now is the time for Souvanna to show strength and good faith," particularly in view of his statement to an ICC member that day that his forces had no orders to attack Nam Tha. Brown reported that he had requested the Canadian member of the ICC to make a renewed effort to get the ICC into Nam Tha.

The Secretary of State replied to Brown that he "should convey to RLG our view that they have themselves largely to blame for Nam Tha situation, and ultimatum [Boun Oum's message to Souvanna] will be regarded by world as another effort [to] avoid negotiations. Attack on Nam Tha was probably a result of injudicious activities by FAR and failure [of] RLG [to] come to agreement on coalition government." Brown should urge the RLG to request Souvanna to come to Luang Prabang as soon as it appeared that the attacks had ceased.

Ambassador Brown replied on 2 February that he had urged Phoumi, through General Boyle and Hasey separately,

to proceed immediately with the Luang Prabang meeting if the attacks ceased and the enemy withdrew or if the ICC was stationed at Nam Tha. Phoumi assured them both that the moment an ICC team was stationed at Nam Tha he would proceed to Luang Prabang for discussions with Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1083, 1 Feb 62; SecState CIRC 1348, 1 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1088, 2 Feb 62.

2 Feb 62

Foreign Minister Thanat told Ambassador Young that the Thai Government had advised Phoumi that the situation was very serious and that while the Thai were aware of the difficulties of his position, they counseled him to be "flexible." On the same day, Young heard from the RLG Ambassador to Thailand, just returned from Vientiane, that Phoumi had received several "very useful" communications from Sarit. This and the President's letter (see items 27 and 31 January 1962), according to the RLG Ambassador, had made Phoumi more "understanding."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1119, 2 Feb 62.

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Feb 62

With reinforcements flown in to Nam Tha during this period, FAR forces established a crescent-shaped line of defense about two miles east of town from which an occasional patrol was sent out into the surrounding countryside. From the heights beyond the perimeter of defense, the enemy maintained an intermittent fire on the airfield and town with 120-mm. mortars. Normal operations at the airfield remained suspended throughout the period. However, on four successive days ending on 6 February FAR aircraft transported the 28th Infantry Battalion with Headquarters, Group Mobile 18, to Nam Tha by employing T-6s for aircover and to suppress enemy mortar fire while the carrier planes were on the ground at the airfield. The senior member of the MAAG staff reported that the T-6s were doing a "good job" in this respect, but that their 5-inch rockets were of limited value for destroying dug-in heavy weapons.

In the two weeks and a half from 21 January to 7 February, FAR forces reported their casualties in the Nam Tha area to be one man killed and nineteen wounded.

FAR strength at Nam Tha on 7 February totalled five battalions, comprising Headquarters, GM-11, with 1st and 2d Infantry Battalions and 13th Volunteer Battalion, and Headquarters, GM-18, with the 28th and 30th Infantry Battalions. Enemy forces in the vicinity were reported to consist of five battalions with four 120-mm. mortars, plus a unit of unknown strength, but CHMAAG expressed doubt about the accuracy of the report.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 198802, 1 Feb 62; DA IN 198926, 2 Feb 62; DA IN 199515, 3 Feb 62; DA IN 199570, 4 Feb 62; DA IN 200552, 5 Feb 62; DA IN 200015, 6 Feb 62; DA IN 200524, 7 Feb 62; DA IN 201031, 8 Feb 62; (S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 199355, 3 Feb 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1124, 8 Feb 62.

3 Feb 62

Phoumi informed the ICC that he would be willing to proceed with the Luang Prabang meeting with Souvanna if he received ICC certification that the enemy had withdrawn 15 kilometers from Nam Tha or if an ICC team was established there. Meanwhile, Ambassadors Addis and Abramov had developed a proposal for dealing with the Nam Tha situation, which they presented to the ICC in the following terms: the ICC would appeal to the three Princes to convoke the Lao cease-fire commission, whose first task would be to reaffirm the cease-fire; the ICC would stand ready to assist the commission in any way it desired, including the dispatch of observer teams to sensitive areas.

The ICC approved the proposal and presented it to Phoumi, who agreed to it provided the other side issued an order to its forces reaffirming the cease-fire effective 4 February. Phoumi was prepared to issue a similar order to the FAR.

The ICC then flew to Khang Khay and presented the proposal to Souvanna and Souphanouvong. These two Princes agreed to a meeting of the cease-fire commission but insisted that a written cease-fire agreement between the three parties be signed before the issuance of a new cease-fire declaration. ICC observers could not be used until after the signing of the agreement. Meetings of the cease-fire commission would have to be at Khang Khay.

Phoumi, upon being informed of this decision, broadcast a statement that the two Khang Khay Princes had refused his appeal for a cease-fire on all fronts. He also informed a MAAG officer that he was contemplating an appeal to SEATO and had sent a message to Sarit asking his advice.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1095, 1097,  
3 Feb 62.

3 Feb 62

Acting on instructions from the Secretary of State to advise the Soviet Government, in its role as Co-Chairman, that the "PL/VM attack" on Nam Tha was endangering the continuation of negotiations among the three Princes, Ambassador Thomposn saw Pushkin in Moscow. The instructions called the Nam Tha assault "a flagrant breach of the cease-fire" and stressed that the US Government could not put sufficiently strong pressures on the RLG to negotiate in good faith when the RLG forces were thus under attack. In making this point to Pushkin, Ambassador Thompson emphasized the fact that the US Government had constantly to take public opinion into consideration. Hence the US would find it difficult to bring pressure to bear on the RLG at a time when it was well known to the public that a major PL offensive was going on.

Pushkin replied that the Nam Tha attack was merely a response to one of the many offensive actions of the FAR launched by Phoumi and should not be viewed as having any connection with the negotiations among the three Princes. The Soviet Union stood for strict

enforcement of the cease-fire, but the only language Phoumi seemed to understand was a reply to his actions with greater force. Ambassador Thompson reported that Pushkin had given "no undertaking whatever" to attempt to change the conditions that prevented the United States from using its influence effectively, but the Ambassador believed that the argument regarding the relationship of US policy to public opinion had made an impression. In a follow-up move requested of the British Government by the State Department, the British Ambassador was scheduled to see Pushkin later the same day.

(S) Msgs, Moscow to SecState, 2109, 3 Feb 62;  
SecState CIRC, 1348, 1 Feb 62.

4 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown, having received the report of a MAAG officer returned from Nam Tha that the town and its airstrip were under intermittent fire and that Phoumi planned both to commit another battalion to Nam Tha's defense and to employ T-6 aircraft against the enemy mortar batteries, gave the Secretary of State his opinion that the enemy's continued bombardment of the town and airstrip was "clearly unjustified." Accordingly the Ambassador did not see how the US could advise Phoumi not to defend himself or refuse helicopter lift to help him do so.

The instructions immediately returned by the Secretary of State agreed that the continued bombardment was unjustified but held that further RLG reinforcement was inadvisable. Noting that the addition of one battalion would not be sufficient to hold Nam Tha but could be provocative and lead to further attacks, the Secretary said that the "best way to save Nam Tha and in fact all of Laos is through negotiations."

In accordance with the instructions, Ambassador Brown and General Boyle advised Phoumi as follows: 1) an appeal to SEATO (see item 3 February 1962) would be useless and undesirable, and the US would oppose a SEATO response to an RLG appeal; 2) if Nam Tha was not under bombardment the next day, he should make no T-6 attack against the opposing batteries; 3) while the US would not insist on the move, it would be a constructive gesture for Phoumi to send representatives to the Plaine des Jarres to discuss a cease-fire, by which he might gain both practical results and favorable world opinion; and 4) he should inform the ICC of his eagerness to reaffirm the cease-fire, his willingness to have the ICC participate in the Laotian cease-fire commission's work, and his desire to have ICC observers stationed at Nam Tha.

Phoumi replied that his ideas were very similar to those of the US. However, in view of the continuing attacks on Nam Tha, he felt that a meeting of military representatives would be unproductive unless preceded by cease-fire orders issued by both sides.

General Boyle advised Phoumi that the dispatch of another battalion to Nam Tha would be an unwise commitment of troops, while Brown pointed out the danger of

its being considered provocative. Phoumi replied that the contemplated movement was not a reinforcement but a replacement of demoralized troops that were to be withdrawn in the same planes that brought in the new unit. He rejected Brown's suggestion that he tell the ICC he was maintaining but not augmenting his force, on the ground that this would give the enemy important information.

Ambassador Brown informed Phoumi that he had been instructed by the Secretary of State to try to get Ambassadors Addis and Abramov, as representatives of the Geneva Co-Chairmen, to go to Xieng Khouang to persuade Souvarna and Souphanouvong to drop their demand that a written cease-fire agreement must precede the dispatch of ICC observers to Nam Tha (see item 3 February 1962).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1098, 1099, 4 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 696, 3 Feb 62.

4 Feb 62

With Presidential agreement, the Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Young to give the Thai Government "full assurances and explanations" regarding the Manila Pact in order to relieve Thai concern over continued SEATO effectiveness. In view of US obligations under SEATO, the US saw no reason for a bilateral defense treaty as proposed by Thailand. Such an additional treaty would be difficult to defend in the US Congress and would perhaps result in less, rather than more, US aid to Thailand. If the Thai Government destroyed SEATO by irresponsible and unwarranted actions or boycotted the Paris meeting, it would also destroy the legal basis of US bilateral obligations to Thailand. After presenting several other arguments, the Secretary of State mentioned that as evidence of its good faith, the US had in the past raised the possibility of stationing US combat troops in Thailand. This had not been acceptable to the Thai Government. At the present, the US was sending a US engineer battalion to Thailand for road construction, which would increase the US military presence in the area. The Secretary also outlined US offers of economic assistance to Thailand as further proof of US concern for Thailand's well-being. (For Ambassador Young's presentation of the above, see item 12 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1134, 4 Feb 62.

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Feb 62

The Secretary of State suggested to Ambassador Thompson that he and British Ambassador Roberts renew the approach they had made to Soviet officials regarding the Nam Tha situation on 3 February (see item). The United States could not accept Pushkin's contention that there was no connection between the action at Nam Tha and the negotiations to form a Laotian government. The Secretary pointed out that the Nam Tha attack was exactly the type of aggressive Pathet Lao action that made it impossible for the United States to exert effective pressure on Phoumi to negotiate in good faith. The avoidance of this very situation had been the object of the approaches made by Sullivan and Harriman to Soviet officials earlier (see items 7 and 27 January 1962) seeking

assurances that if the United States imposed strong sanctions on Phoumi the USSR could be relied upon to prevent any Pathet Lao military action taking advantage of the weakened state of the RLG. The United States believed that the RLG had taken a reasonable stand in the current situation, namely, that if the enemy forces ceased their attack and withdrew from the immediate vicinity of Nam Tha, or if ICC representatives were permitted to visit the scene, Phoumi and Boun Oum were prepared to go forward with the negotiations in Luang Prabang. Continuation of the negotiations, therefore, depended on Soviet efforts to persuade Souvanna and Souphanouvong to allow either of these conditions to come about.

In a further message less than ten hours later the Secretary directed an urgent approach to the Soviets to express "most serious concern" over a report that Nam Tha was under heavy attack and to suggest that if not stopped forthwith, this development might vitiate the hope of a peaceful settlement in Laos.

Before receipt in Moscow of the second, more urgent message, Ambassador Roberts met with Pushkin on 5 February. As Thompson reported it, "Pushkin was equally negative but rougher in his reaction than on previous visit." He charged that Phoumi was seeking to wreck the negotiations by aggressive military actions and other hindrances to Souvanna's efforts that were designed to provoke Souvanna to the point of walking out. The Soviet Union was angry at the "game being played" and believed that "Phoumi must be put in his place." Pushkin's reaction appeared to confirm the impression Thompson had already received that the Soviets would do nothing to prevent the capture of Nam Tha.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, 1807, 4 Feb 62; 1808, 5 Feb 62; Moscow to SecState, 2122, 2126, 5 Feb 62.

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Feb 62

A series of meetings in Vientiane of Ambassadors Addis, Abromov, Brown and the ICC failed to produce agreement on a way to bring about negotiations between the three Princes for a Lao government of national unity. Abramov, supported by the Polish ICC representative, maintained that Souvanna would not make a declaration reaffirming the cease-fire, as proposed by Phoumi, because he had no faith in Phoumi's word. Phoumi, maintained the Russian, was "gravely at fault" because of his provocative military actions. If he succeeded in them, he would be in a position to dictate terms at the conference table; if he failed he could pose as the victim and perhaps inspire outside help. The Polish ICC representative stated that Phoumi should be punished for his many violations of the cease-fire, even to the extent of being deprived of some territory.

Brown, supported by Addis, stated that his government was gravely concerned about the Nam Tha situation because it was preventing negotiations. Even if both sides had been provocative in the past, the attack on

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Nam Tha was a clear violation of the cease-fire since the town had been in the possession of the RLG on 3 May 1961, when the cease-fire had gone into effect. Military force, said Brown, was the wrong way to bring Phoumi to the conference table; if continued, it would have the opposite effect. The US would not and could not pressure Phoumi to enter into further negotiations so long as he was under military attack. Thus, whether or not negotiations could proceed depended entirely upon Souvanna's willingness to agree to a mutual cease-fire declaration.

When the Soviet diplomat warned that Princes Souvanna and Souphanouvong were losing their patience because of their fruitless meetings with Boun Oum, Ambassador Brown replied that "our patience about continued military pressure and attacks on Nam Tha . . . was beginning to run out also." Abramov responded by quoting Souvanna to the effect that a collapse of negotiations would bring war. The US Ambassador then called the Soviet Ambassador's attention to the efforts made by the US at Geneva to achieve a peaceful solution and stated that he was relying on Abramov to make possible the renewal of negotiations.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1103, 4 Feb 62; 1106, 1107, 1110, 5 Feb 62.

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Thirteen representatives of the Joint Staff and the Services made a field trip to Southeast Asia, visiting South Viet Nam, Thailand, and Laos. Among the party were the Directors of J-4 and J-6, the Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, and Major General J. S. Holtoner, Chairman of the Southeast Asia Study Group and member of the JSSC. (See item 28 March 1962.)

(TS)Chairman, Southeast Asia Study Group, "Report of Field Trip to Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand and Laos), 4-18 February 1962," JMF 9150/5420 (4 Feb 62).

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[REDACTED] informed [REDACTED] that the Laos Country Team proposal for expansion of resistance forces in north and central Laos (see item 12 January 1962) had been approved. The Country Team was given the authority it had requested to oversee the program, and [REDACTED] was authorized to issue: 1) up to 5,000 Springfield '03 rifles in northern Laos (holding back half of them initially until a later stage), and 2) 2,500 more modern weapons in the Xieng Khouang, Sam Neua, and central Laos area.

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Phoumi called in Ambassadors Addis and Abramov and delivered to them a long message to the Geneva Co-Chairmen protesting against enemy aggression at Nam Tha and elsewhere. He also said that Boun Oum's original statement on Nam Tha (see item 1 February 1962) had been misunderstood. The RLG had not intended to place any obstacle in the way of Souvanna's proposed visit to Luang Prabang to see the King on 2 February.

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There was still no objection to it. Further, Phoumi and Boun Oum were now prepared to consult with Souvanna at Luang Prabang, provided he requested them to do so, or if he met the conditions proposed by Phoumi to the Commission. If such a meeting was to take place, Phoumi would be willing to discuss with Souvanna the pre-conditions necessary to a meeting of the three Princes. He had no objection to such a meeting at Luang Prabang, provided offensive military operations had ended first.

Brown reported that the ICC, accompanied by Ambassadors Addis and Abramov, was to proceed to Khang Khay on 6 February to convey Phoumi's message to Souvanna and obtain his reply. He reported further that Phoumi's declaration that Boun Oum's statement had been "misunderstood" had been inspired by the US Embassy.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1111, 5 Feb 62.

5 Feb 62

After expressing concern over the situation at Nam Tha, Prime Minister Sarit informed Ambassador Young that Phoumi had asked Thailand for bombs for his T-6 aircraft and had also told Sarit that the RLG planned to request assistance from SEATO and the UN. Sarit had agreed that the RLG should appeal to SEATO and the UN but had refused to supply bombs until he had consulted the US. While Thai reluctance to become more deeply involved with Phoumi without US approval was "a very good sign," Young warned nevertheless that the US could not continue relying on Thai self-restraint in a matter so vital to Thai national interests. He requested immediate advice from the State Department.

Later the same day, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to tell Sarit

[REDACTED]

The US also considered an RLG appeal to SEATO useless since there was no evidence of a full-scale Communist offensive that would justify SEATO action; moreover, Phoumi was well aware of US opposition to such an appeal (see item 4 February 1962). An appeal to the UN would likewise be undesirable. The RLG's delaying tactics in the face of international attempts to settle the Lao problem had left it with little support in world opinion.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1130, 5 Feb 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1137, 5 Feb 62.

5 Feb 62

The JCS in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense replied to a request by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), dated 8 January, that they comment on a proposed statement of the Department of Defense position regarding military assistance to a Souvanna government. (Noting that the tentative Geneva agreements required that no conditions of a political nature could be attached to any assistance and that no military personnel or civilian advisors, except for a few French military instructors, could be introduced into Laos, and



noting further that during the reconstitution of the Lao forces control of aid distribution would be impossible, ISA had proposed that the Secretary of Defense take the following positions: that the Department of Defense not recommend military aid for a Souvanna coalition government on military or strategic grounds, but that it interpose no objection to limited defense support allocations or limited maintenance-type MAP items if the Department of State considered the political requirement to be overriding.)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they had no objection to the proposed statement. Considering the possibility that such aid might fall into the hands of a government antagonistic to the United States, they recommended that the question be kept under continuing review in the light of the developing orientation of the Souvanna government.

(S) JCSM-91-62 for SecSef, "Military Aid to Coalition Government in Laos Under Souvanna Phoumi," 5 Feb 62, derived from JCS 2344/31, 29 Jan 62, JMF 9155.2/4060.

5 Feb 62

In a memorandum to the JCS on "Military Courses of Action in Support of United States National Objectives in Laos," the Chief of Naval Operations expressed his view that the JCS should consider the possible contingencies in Southeast Asia in the next two or three years and the military objectives necessary for supporting US policy. The CNO posed ten questions based on potentially adverse situations, any one or a combination of which he considered highly probable, and raised two related problems, all of which he recommended for early consideration by the Joint Staff.

[After first referring the CNO's memorandum to J-5, the JCS on 20 February discussed the memorandum and agreed to refer it to JSSC (General Holtoner's Southeast Asia Study Group) for comment and recommendation. (See item 9 March 1962.)]

(TS) JCS 2344/33, 5 Feb 62, JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

5 Feb 62

During a conversation with US officials at Geneva, British Co-Chairman MacDonald said he saw Pushkin's continued absence from Geneva as an indication supporting his belief that the Soviets desired to see a Laotian settlement reached through regular diplomatic channels and direct negotiations in Laos itself, without the aggravation of "propaganda-ridden" plenary sessions of the Conference. MacDonald suggested that Pushkin might wish to delay his return to Geneva for as long as possible as a means of preserving "freedom from Chicom nagging and sniping."

In another conversation the following day, the acting head of the French delegation expressed similar views. He believed there was a basic Soviet willingness to cooperate in reaching a Laotian agreement, despite occasional "compulsive" propaganda blasts for

the benefit of the Communist gallery. The French considered, however, that the Russians were hypersensitive to any open reference by Western spokesmen to Soviet willingness to cooperate. Such references only obliged the Soviets to stiffen their attitude in carrying out their duties as Co-Chairman.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1110, 6 Feb 62.

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As part of US planning for a phased imposition of sanctions upon Phoumi if he continued to resist the formation of a Souvanna government [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that one planned sanction was the withdrawal of air support from the FAR. Washington agencies presently envisioned that the US would withdraw, under CHMAAG Laos supervision, all Air America assets and personnel--rotary wing aircraft going to Udorn, fixed wing aircraft to Thailand or South Viet Nam. The fixed wing aircraft would be held ready to return to Laos to evacuate the American community or resume support of Phoumi or his successor during renewed large-scale hostilities. [REDACTED] requested that:

1. Air America officials, [REDACTED] the US Ambassador to Laos begin preparing an aircraft evacuation plan and consult on the details of evacuating the American community. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED] consult with the respective US Ambassadors to estimate the willingness of Thailand and South Viet Nam to receive the Air America aircraft.

[REDACTED] support of the Meo would continue, regardless of the above sanction or the halting of any other military aid program. The [REDACTED] should therefore incorporate continued air support of the Meo in their planning for withdrawal of air support from the RLG.

On 8 February, [REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos, USARMA Vientiane, and Ambassador Brown informed [REDACTED] that they did not agree entirely with the manner in which the US planned to withdraw aerial support of the FAR. The US representatives in Laos did not think it realistic to plan on abruptly withdrawing aircraft from Laos and then reintroducing them to evacuate the American community. At the time of the plan's execution, Phoumi would have suffered both economic and military sanctions at the hands of the US; the US could not expect such a "chivalrous gesture" as his allowing US aircraft to return and pick up evacuees. The US officials in Laos recommended, as a "far wiser" sequence of actions, that:

1. Prior to a decision to withdraw air support, the US should recall WSMITs and MAAG regional advisers to regional headquarters, since these personnel were dependent upon US air support for food and evacuation.

2. The US should then inform the RLG that, as a result of the suspension of economic and military assistance programs, many US and third-country (Filipino) personnel were no longer required in Laos and would therefore be evacuated. During its course this evacuation would serve as justification for the diversion of all US aircraft from support of the FAR. At the same time, Air America--and Scott Bird & Co., if that firm was willing--would attempt to evacuate inconspicuously as much equipment and as many non-essential personnel as possible.

3. At the completion of these evacuations, but only then, Phoumi would be told that the US was withdrawing its air support of the FAR and that, consequently, the US aircraft would not be returning to Vientiane.

Regarding the continued air support of the Meo, the US officials assumed that it would take the form of night parachute drops, or day drops by unmarked aircraft. Sarit would probably tolerate such an operation originating from Thailand, if it was not on too large a scale and if he was not too angered by the US action against Phoumi. Supporting the Meo by air from South Viet Nam would be most difficult, the US representatives concluded, because of the distance the aerial missions would have to cover.

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With all the principals and many of the heads of delegations absent from Geneva, the Conference could only mark time and await events in Laos, although the Indian delegation in particular was beginning to urge the Conference to assert its presence and its authority by holding some sort of public meeting. Swezey, the acting head of the US delegation and MacDonald opposed the Indian suggestion, asserting that a public meeting would provide an opportunity for charges and counter-charges, and would also detract from the diplomatic efforts toward a settlement being conducted in Laos. This dissuaded the Indian delegation, but Swezey warned that their proposal would undoubtedly be restated unless concrete signs of progress toward a settlement soon appeared from Vientiane.

The Soviet delegation remained quiescent and there were no indications of Pushkin's returning to Geneva.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1116, 13 Feb 62.

6 Feb 62

A memorandum by the Chairman, JCS, called the attention of the Secretary of Defense to State Department instructions to the Ambassador to Laos, dated 22 December 1961 (see item), in which it was suggested that, in order to

hold the Laotian budget to a minimum following formation of a Souvanna coalition government, FAR troops be placed on half-pay or subsistence until integration and demobilization were completed. The Chairman informed the Secretary of Defense that the JCS were in agreement with the strong objections CINCPAC had entered against this measure, which he felt would "abet a Communist-inspired revolution and make bandits and plunderers out of law-abiding soldiers." The JCS recommended approaching the State Department with a view to having the instruction rescinded and to ensuring that adequate provision be made for the welfare of FAR troops until they were demobilized and absorbed into the civilian economy. (See item 14 February 1962.)

(S) CM-537-62 for SecDef, "Instructions on Economic Aid . . .," 6 Feb 62, reproduced in (S) JCS 2344/34, 8 Feb 62; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 197037, 26 Jan 62; all in JMF 9155.2/4060 (8 Jan 62).

6 Feb 62      Ambassadors Addis and Abramov and the ICC met with Souvanna at Khang Khay and conveyed to him the contents of Phoumi's message of the previous day (see item 5 February 1962). Souvanna replied that his visit to Luang Prabang was simply awaiting the King's decision. (A letter from Souvanna to the King requesting an audience was delivered during the afternoon by the Chairman of the ICC to a RLG official.) With regard to a cease-fire, Souvanna continued to insist on a signed written agreement. He was prepared to receive Phoumi's representatives at Khang Khay for the purpose of drawing up such an agreement the next day.

Souvanna maintained that Boun Oum should come to Khang Khay and handed a message containing an invitation to such a meeting to the Chairman of the ICC for delivery to Boun Oum.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1116, 1117, 1119, 6 Feb 62.

6 Feb 62      The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, because efforts to pressure Phoumi into negotiating in good faith no longer seemed promising, the time had come for direct negotiations with Souvanna. The objective of such negotiations, according to Secretary Rusk, would be "to take the initiative away from Phoumi and prevent him from forcing our hand."

Accordingly, the Secretary instructed Ambassador Brown to request British Ambassador Addis to inform Souvanna that, when he had called off his attack on Nam Tha, the US would be prepared to negotiate directly with him on a coalition government acceptable to it. The US, however, could not impose strong sanctions against Phoumi, designed to force the existing RLG to agree to the new government, until Souvanna had provided assurance that he was willing and able to form an acceptable government.

In broad outline, the plan for direct negotiations was as follows:

1. Stop military attacks on Nam Tha, or, if it had fallen, bring about its return to the RLG.

2. Approach Souvanna, through the US, British and French Ambassadors, and indicate that the US was now ready to discuss directly with him the composition of a government of national union. If Souvanna and the US could reach general agreement on the formation of such a government and such other important matters as demobilization and integration of the armed forces of the Lao factions, the US would then be prepared to support him. To be satisfactory to the US the cabinet should include nine strong, capable, and experienced Vientiane personalities, including four representing the Phoumi-Boun Oum faction.

3. Arrange for the ICC to invite the Geneva Conference Co-Chairmen to Laos, if Souvanna's cabinet proposals proved acceptable to the US. The Co-Chairmen would add weight to US support of Souvanna and would keep the military situation under control.

4. Presentation by Souvanna of his proposed government to the King. The three Ambassadors and the Co-Chairmen would follow up, informing the King that they were prepared to support Souvanna's proposed government and saw no acceptable alternative to it.

(See item 7 February 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Sec State to Vientiane, 703, 704, 6 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62 Phoumi informed Ambassador Addis that his position was still that there could be no substantive political discussions with Souvanna and Souphanouvong so long as military pressures continued, particularly at Nam Tha. If military pressures were lifted, however, Phoumi and Boun Oum would be willing to attend meetings at the Plaine des Jarres or elsewhere.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1121, 7 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62 The Secretary of State approved Ambassador Brown's recommendation that there be a delay of about 48 hours in the approach to Souvanna by British Ambassador Addis, carrying the US proposal for direct negotiations with Souvanna on the formation of a government (see item 6 February 1962). Brown had recommended this because he saw both hope of favorable development in the current negotiations for a cease-fire and danger in what might be a too precipitate injection of the idea of direct negotiations with Souvanna by the three Western Ambassadors. He feared that making the approach without a "new peg to hand it on" might convince the Pathet Lao and the Soviets that their military pressure, chiefly at Nam Tha, had been successful in bringing the US more actively to the support of Souvanna. The approach might better be made, Brown said, only upon some renewed evidence of Phoumi-Boun Oum obduracy. If

progress were made during the next two days in the negotiations for a cease-fire and toward a meeting of the three Princes, the approach would be unnecessary.

Brown offered further reasons for caution. Once the US message was given to Souvanna, "we will be very much in his hands in our negotiations with him"; the United States would ultimately have either to accept the best government composition offered by Souvanna and Souphanouvong or to withdraw entirely from Laos. US ties with the RLG would largely be broken by turning to Souvanna. Phoumi and other representatives of the RLG and the Vientiane neutrals, who the US had hoped would form a strong right wing in the coalition government, might be unwilling to serve in a government that they would feel had been negotiated by foreigners. King Savang would almost certainly see the US re-orientation toward Souvanna as an affront. The RLG, at Phoumi's instigation, might restrict the Western diplomats to Vientiane or declare some of them persona non grata, in which case the negotiations with Souvanna would have to take place outside the country, perhaps in Phnom Penh. Brown could not see how the proposed US course would achieve its stated objective of taking the initiative away from Phoumi and preventing him from "forcing our hand." The US ability to hold Phoumi to observance of the cease-fire or prevent him from launching attacks in desperation or withdrawing to southern Laos would be considerably lessened. With the hope of preventing these violent reactions, Ambassador Brown recommended that he be authorized to tell Phoumi, as tactfully as possible, of the planned US approach to Souvanna. Brown said he assumed no further sanctions would be applied against the RLG for the time being. He asked the status of the February cash deposit and whether it was still intended that strong sanctions would not be applied against Phoumi and the FAR until assurances had been received from the Soviets that they would restrain the Pathet Lao (see items 7 and 27 January 1962).

In reply, the Secretary of State authorized the 48-hour delay but reaffirmed the intention of going ahead with the project of informing Souvanna that, subject to cessation of the attack on Nam Tha, the United States was prepared to initiate discussions with him directly on the formulation of a coalition government the US could accept. The Secretary said that the US Government was not prepared to accept the risk that Phoumi and Boun Oum would again frustrate the negotiations at a critical stage, for they would be difficult to start again after another failure. The US would continue to withhold the February cash deposit pending further developments. The purpose of bringing the Geneva Co-Chairmen to Laos would be to keep the military situation under control during a difficult period during which the United States would be taking action, possibly including withdrawal of military support from the FAR, to bring a Souvanna government into power. The presence of the Co-Chairmen, the Secretary said, might prove an alternative

to obtaining the Soviet assurances Brown had asked about. Finally, the Secretary approved Brown's suggestion that Phoumi be told of the US undertakings with Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1123, 7 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 709, 7 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

From London, Ambassador Bruce reported the British Foreign Office view that the Pathet Lao attack on Nam Tha was a reaction to previous FAR moves against Muong Sai and the subsequent retreat of Phoumi's troops, which had made Nam Tha an inviting target. The Foreign Office considered that the Pathet Lao thus far showed restraint in not capturing Nam Tha. The Ambassador noted particularly that the British assessed Phoumi's moves as an attempt to provoke a situation that would involve the SEATO powers militarily in Laos.

In a reply on 9 February, Assistant Secretary Harriman hoped that the Ambassador "could get across to FonOff we do not agree [with] British assessment that blatant PL/VN attack on Nam Tha was merely predictable reaction to previous FAR moves against Muong Sai." The FAR had been engaged only in normal clearing operations in territory not held by either side at the time of the May cease-fire, "and we stopped attack on Muong Sai." In contrast, the PL drive toward Nam Tha carried them into territory definitely held by the FAR and was an open, inexcusable cease-fire violation. If the Pathet Lao-Viet Minh had chosen force as the means to induce Phoumi to negotiate, in Harriman's view "this psychology [was] completely wrong." No doubt the enemy could take Nam Tha, but such action would gravely prejudice the chance for peaceful settlement. Harriman suggested that the Chinese Communists might also be behind the move to capture or at least dominate the Nam Tha airfield, owing to its proximity to their border. In the meanwhile, the United States was continuing to do all it could to prevent Phoumi from taking provocative actions.

(S) Msgs, London to SecState, 2916, 7 Feb 62; SecState to London, 4236, 9 Feb 62.

7 Feb 62

The Secretary General of SEATO warned the SEATO representatives in Bangkok to prepare for an RLG appeal for assistance. Privately he gave his view that a SEATO refusal to respond favorably to another Lao appeal would be a mortal blow to the organization. The US, UK, and French representatives asserted, however, that a Lao appeal would be "untimely" owing to the existence of the ICC and Geneva Co-Chairmen machinery to handle the situation.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1163, 9 Feb 62.

8 Feb 62

The Government of France, in commenting upon the US decision to deal directly with Souvanna if the attack against Nam Tha were halted (see item 6 February 1962), expressed general agreement with the US decision along with qualified optimism regarding its chances of success. The French, however, were not satisfied with certain aspects of the plan. The major reservations,



as stated by M. Manac'h of the French Foreign Office to an officer of the American Embassy in Paris, concerned: 1) the lack of consultation between the US and France prior to the American approval of an approach to Souvanna by the British Ambassador to Laos; 2) the "difficulties of stopping short of outright intervention"; and 3) doubt of the wisdom of involving the Co-Chairmen, arising both from preference for a strictly tripartite (US-UK-French) handling of the matter and from fear that the Soviets would find means of "clouding the prospects" once the Co-Chairmen were involved.

Specifically, the French Government hoped for a fully coordinated tripartite effort and had so instructed Alphand, the French Ambassador to the US. Since the US, at Ambassador Brown's request (see item 7 February 1962), had postponed Addis's visit to Khang Khay, there would be ample time for the desired coordination. The proposed invitation to the Co-Chairmen, Manac'h suggested, should be delayed as long as possible. King Savang, after all, had shown antipathy toward both the Co-Chairmen and the ICC, which would issue the invitation. Furthermore, involvement of the Co-Chairmen would "give the Russians double innings, as leader of the bloc and as co-chairman."

Manac'h also stated that the French hope of avoiding a written cease-fire agreement might be realized. The French had in this manner sought to avoid enhancing the prestige of the Pathet Lao at a time when unification of the armies was imminent.

Regarding Nam Tha, the French did not seem concerned. Manac'h looked upon the incident as a Pathet Lao response to RLG aggression, presumably at Mahaxay. Moreover, few of Kong Le's troops were believed involved, and Souvanna himself had given assurance that Nam Tha would not be taken.

When an officer of the American Embassy mentioned, in general, the latest estimate of Viet Minh strength in Laos (as many as 10,000; see items 26 and 31 January 1962), Manac'h was extremely surprised. The French diplomat wondered if the figures were not unrealistic, since they were not confirmed by French sources. Manac'h believed that the US Country Team might have included certain "minority and border elements" and stated that he would request the opinion of French military sources in Laos.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3780, 8 Feb 62; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3796, 8 Feb 62.

8 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that Falaize had received no instructions from the French Government regarding the tripartite approach to Souvanna and that Addis had not yet been authorized by London to join the proposed negotiations (see items 6, 7, and 9 February 1962).



Brown also stated that on the previous day Abramov had repeated to Addis an assurance by Souphanouvong that Nam Tha would not be taken. Addis, on the basis of his recent conversations with Souvanna, had advised the British Foreign Office that the Prince was highly suspicious of the US and might regard the offer to deal with him directly as simply an attempt to relieve the military pressure on Nam Tha.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1125, 8 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Phoumi, in a long discussion with Hasey, said that a government of national union under Souvanna was not possible because it could not, in any form, be acceptable to all Lao parties. The RLG would not agree, in any case, to control by Souvanna of the Defense and Interior Ministries. He was confident that the King would not agree to a Souvanna Government if the RLG disapproved it.

Phoumi said that the ideal solution would be for the King to be voted special powers by the National Congress, authorizing him to run the government by six councils as follows: defense, Souvanna; administration, Boun Oum; economic affairs and finance, Souphanouvong; foreign affairs, Phoui Sananikone; culture, Nhouy Abhay; and social affairs, Outhong Souvannavong. Each head of council would be able to appoint as many council members as he wished, subject to approval by the King. A second possibility would be a recognized but not formally agreed partition of Laos based generally on the present positions of the two sides. A third solution would be a North-South partition.

Phoumi favored the King-and-six-councils solution but believed de facto partition to be more feasible. North-South partition was opposed by the King, and for this reason Phoumi was not currently moving to set up a southern bastion.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1141, 9 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Souvanna replied to the message by which Ambassador Addis had forwarded Phoumi's position of 7 February (see item). In his reply, Souvanna said that the ICC and Ambassadors Addis and Abramov should urge Phoumi and Boun Oum to go to the Plaine des Jarres to arrange for immediate establishment of a coalition government in accordance with the Zurich, Hin Heup, and Geneva agreements. Rejecting Phoumi's demand that military pressures must first be lifted, Souvanna called for the meeting to be scheduled without prior conditions. Military delegations could meet at the same time to negotiate on cease-fire problems.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1145, 10 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that the Department of State had discussed with the French and British Embassies at Washington the instructions that France and the UK were about to give to their Ambassadors at Vientiane regarding the proposed tri-partite approach to Souvanna (see items 6 and 7

February 1962). The Secretary of State believed that, though both the Allies would instruct their Ambassadors to take part in the approach, neither France nor Britain would permit their diplomatic representatives to engage in what the Governments regarded as "cabinet making."

The British indicated that Addis was being instructed to consult with Brown and Falaize concerning questions of timing and, if the other Ambassadors agreed, to make the initial approach to Souvanna. During this first conversation, Addis was to explore the general ways in which Souvanna could earn US support. The British Ambassador would stress that, since the US would back Souvanna if his proposed cabinet seemed reasonable, the Prince should submit his ideas in advance so that the US could study them and offer comment. In subsequent talks, Addis would support the efforts of the US to obtain the type of balanced government that it desired.

The French Embassy undertook to request the Foreign Office in Paris to instruct Ambassador Falaize to participate in joint talks with Souvanna.

Both the British and French, however, expressed reservations about entering into detailed discussions with Souvanna regarding the "personalities" in his cabinet. Secretary Rusk therefore explained that, although personalities need not be discussed initially, it eventually would be necessary to "talk frankly with Souvanna about at least some individuals for sensitive posts," if the goal of a balanced cabinet with at least nine strong and capable members from Vientiane was to be realized. The extent and timing of these discussions of individuals would depend on Souvanna's reaction to the initial approach, Phoumi's attitude, and developments among the Princes themselves. The main thing, according to Secretary Rusk, was that the Western Ambassadors were free to use their judgment in selecting the best means to insure a successful approach to Souvanna.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 721, 9 Feb 62.

9 Feb 62

Ambassador Young observed to the Secretary of State that the alert to move certain Thai Army units to northeast Thailand was a result of the serious Thai concern over recent Communist action in the Nam Tha area. Although the troops had been alerted, US observers considered it highly unlikely that they would be moved unless the situation seriously deteriorated, since the practical consideration of per diem payment would make the Thai Government reluctant. (See item 13 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1163, 9 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

In a message to Souvanna, Boun Oum rejected his invitation to come to Khang Khay for talks on the formation of a government of national union (see item 8 February 1962), saying that such talks could not be productive in the current atmosphere of armed hostilities. Boun Oum called on Souvanna to "order

the Vietminh troops to leave the National Territory" and refrain from further attacks, and he urged Souvanna to send military representatives to Ban Hin Heup to discuss a cease-fire. Only after these measures had been fully applied would Boun Oum be prepared to enter into negotiations.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1150, 10 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi had informed MAAG that he intended to reinforce Nam Tha with a paratroop battalion drawn from Seno, to enable his forces to push the enemy from high ground adjacent to the town. Phoumi had asked MAAG for support with C-46 aircraft to drop the battalion. It continued to be the judgment of MAAG and the Ambassador that, in addition to the political undesirability of such action, reinforcement of Nam Tha would only send more FAR troops into a trap and would be countered by further enemy reinforcements. Accordingly Phoumi's request was being denied and CHMAAG's previous advice regarding the military inadvisability of reinforcing Nam Tha was being reiterated to Phoumi. Later in the day Brown reported that the RLG response to the US refusal and advice had been a statement that reinforcement of Nam Tha would proceed with resources available to the FAR. Still later in the day, with the continued concurrence of MAAG, the Ambassador refused a further request for US assistance in air-lifting a battalion, destined for Nam Tha, from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.

The State Department informed Ambassador Brown that Phoumi's unwillingness to follow US advice on military matters was causing serious concern. It was feared that reinforcement combined with aggressive patrolling and T-6 strikes might force or give excuse for a reversal of the apparent decision by the other side not to take Nam Tha for the time being.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1146, 10 Feb 62, received in JCS as DA IN 201505; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1149, 1151, 10 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 726, 10 Feb 62.

10 Feb 62

Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Thailand's dissatisfaction with SEATO ran deep, pervaded all levels of Thai political and military leadership, and particularly infected Foreign Minister Thanat. The Ambassador outlined the sources of the Thai conviction that SEATO was a "failure": the deteriorating situation in Laos and the Thai doubts, heightened by the Lao situation, that SEATO could not insure Thai security if certain members (i.e., European) vetoed or obstructed US actions. Moreover, SEATO was now viewed in some quarters as an obstacle to closer regional associations and to greater flexibility in Thai foreign policy.

The Ambassador believed it essential that the US fight this ill-considered undermining of SEATO until a US-Thai reevaluation of SEATO might take place. To buy time for this purpose, several immediate measures should be taken. The Ambassador submitted a draft

message that he recommended the Secretary of State, in his capacity as US SEATO council member, send to the Thai Government; he also suggested that CINCPAC, as US SEATO military adviser, send a similar message to his Thai counterpart.

If Thailand had not, in fact, already decided to abandon SEATO, the Ambassador added, willingness to stay would be contingent on US promises to overhaul the organization in the near future. If, on the other hand, the Thai intended to destroy SEATO (the Ambassador assumed that SEATO without Thailand was useless to the US), the US must prevail on them to cooperate in an orderly transition so as to minimize the blow to US prestige such a break-up would engender.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1167, 1168, 10 Feb 62.

11 Feb 62

CHMAAG Laos relayed to the JCS without comment a report from FAR sources that T-6 aircraft on a strike 25 miles east of Nam Tha on 8 February had fired on two IL-14 aircraft that were dropping supplies to the enemy. One of the IL-14's was believed to have been hit.

No enemy shelling of the town and Nam Tha airfield was reported, although there had been sporadic mortar fire for several days past. Patrols of both sides were active. The tactical situation remained unchanged.

The FAR resumed the reinforcement of Nam Tha by airdropping the leading elements of the 1st Parachute Battalion.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 201752, 11 Feb 62; DA IN 201944, 12 Feb 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 8-62, 23 Feb 62.

12 Feb 62

Ambassador Addis, in an interview with Souvanna at Khang Khay, made known the US intention of working directly with Souvanna for the formation of a government of national union, as set forth in the Department of State instructions of 6 February (see item), and also delivered a personal message from Assistant Secretary Harriman covering the same points in general terms. Souvanna accepted these messages as "very encouraging." In the opinion of Addis, he appeared to accept readily that the US must approve a final cabinet slate before it was presented and that it would be impossible to begin negotiations while Nam Tha was under attack.

Souvanna had said earlier, in the presence of Souphanouvong and Abramov, that he was prepared to make a declaration that he was simply defending himself against RLG attack at Nam Tha, but for him to order an end to the firing on the airfield there would be quite another matter, since the firing was designed to prevent the landing of reinforcements.

When Addis suggested that a local truce under ICC supervision would give assurance against reinforcement, Souphanouvong rejected the idea. Later Souphanouvong said flatly that he would continue the military pressure on Nam Tha "for political reasons."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1155, 12 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 722, 9 Feb 62

12 Feb 62

A joint State-Defense-Aid Circular message informed US diplomatic posts in underdeveloped countries, and others, that the President desired the US to take advantage of every opportunity for using the indigenous military forces of underdeveloped countries for civic action programs--"projects useful to the populace at all levels in such fields as training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others." The US Government had developed a pattern of responsibility for such efforts. Military assistance missions would program and fund projects that increased the civic action capability of military or paramilitary forces under their supervision; AID missions would program and fund the necessary materials and local labor costs for specific development projects, as well as requirements to increase the civic action capabilities of paramilitary units under their supervision (e.g., police forces). All US agencies would at the same time encourage the host governments to use their own resources in such programs. The various diplomatic posts were requested to reexamine the capabilities of local military forces for civic action programs and recommend the shape of US support for any feasible programs thereby discovered. (See item 23 February 1962 for the recommendation of the Laos Country Team.)

(S) Msg, AIDTO CIRC, X-189, 12 Feb 62 (filed in JCS Msg Center as DA IN 201890).

12 Feb 62

As instructed (see item 4 February 1962), Ambassador Young set forth for Prime Minister Sarit and Foreign Minister Thanat an assessment of SEATO's role in SEA security plans and a further assurance of US support for Thailand. Sarit's reaction was blunt: he knew and appreciated the President's concern and interest, but he did not want assistance and support for Thailand through SEATO unless it was changed. "Things we have asked to be changed in SEATO must be changed or we will leave SEATO or at least not attend meetings . . . . I think it would be better to be out of SEATO like Viet Nam and just get assistance from the US. I don't like the action required by the treaty. We cannot lie to the Thai people any more and say SEATO will help Thailand because SEATO is unable to."

Foreign Minister Thanat also interjected his own anti-SEATO views into the conversation. He posed two questions to the US Ambassador: 1) did the US position on SEATO mean that the US opposed any changes in SEATO; and 2) were not these US assurances necessary only because there were certain actions that the US could not take through SEATO because of the veto? In its present state, Thanat charged, SEATO was unnecessary

and obstructive. Despite the Ambassador's repeated assurances to the contrary, Thanat refused to retreat from this position. This conversation proved, Ambassador Young observed, how very low SEATO had sunk in the estimation of the Thai Government and how urgently US action was needed to repair this deterioration.

Ambassador Young also sought to clarify the status of SEATO Tactical Air Exercise AIR COBRA, which Sarit had indicated should have been referred to him for approval as a political matter and which the Thai Air Force opposed. When Young reviewed the record of SEATO approval during 1961 of the scheduling of the exercise, Sarit and Thanat denied knowledge of it. In any event, they now refused Thai participation in AIR COBRA if it was to be under SEATO auspices. Thailand would participate, however, if it was carried out as a bilateral US-Thai exercise. The Thai Air Force believed the exercise would be useless under SEATO, Sarit explained, and such agreement as had been given was on the understanding that it would be a joint Thai-US project. (See items 16 and 22 March 1962.)  
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1177, 12 Feb 62.

12-18  
Feb 62

There was little to report from the Geneva Conference, which remained inactive. Speculation continued regarding Pushkin's return to Geneva, with MacDonald observing that this was unlikely before the end of February, if then, since he believed the Soviets intended to wait until some pattern emerged from the Vientiane talks. He felt that Soviet irritation over the lack of progress in Laos had begun to stimulate doubts of US sincerity in seeking a mutually agreeable settlement. News of US action in withholding both the February financial payment to the RLG and logistical support for the FAR forces at Nam Tha had been reassuring, however, and may have influenced Pushkin's evident postponement of his return to Geneva.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1120, 21 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

King Savang granted Souvanna's request for an audience (see item 6 February 1962) on a date to be determined. (This was later set as 16 February; see item.)  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1161, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

In response to an appeal by Boun Oum (see item 10 February 1962) for a renewed cease-fire, Souvanna claimed that the outbreak of hostilities had been provoked by the RLG and declared that Boun Oum alone could "put an end to these attacks and this harassment to which our troops must reply in self-defense." Souvanna, after observing that it was the responsibility of the Geneva Conference to order the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos, denied that he had any foreign troops under his control. In conclusion, Souvanna called for an immediate meeting of the Princes on the Plaine des Jarres to form a national coalition and thus settle the entire Lao problem.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1160, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, although military pressure was being maintained against Nam Tha, he expected the British and French Ambassadors to urge him within a few days to enter into negotiations with Souvanna during that Prince's visit to Luang Prabang. Since his instructions specified that he should not negotiate with Souvanna until operations against Nam Tha had been halted, the US Ambassador now inquired how the Secretary of State wished him to react to probable British and French arguments that this opportunity to confer with Souvanna might represent the last chance for a political settlement.

The Secretary of State replied that, although improvement in the situation at Nam Tha seemed unlikely, Ambassador Brown should nevertheless carry on discussions with Souvanna along the lines previously set forth (see item 6 February 1962).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1156, 13 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 730, 13 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

The Thai Government announced that as a result of increased Communist military activity in the Nam Tha area, Thai Army units had been dispatched to "certain strategic points" along the Lao border. Thailand termed the Communist activity near Nam Tha a violation of the Lao cease-fire agreement and a possible danger to Thailand.

The Thai press commented that this movement of Thai forces into the border area was the first since the Franco-Thai War of 1940-1941. Until now the frontier had been guarded by a small and lightly armed border patrol; the Thai Army had remained outside the area pursuant to an agreement with the French which, although actually expired, was still honored by the Thai Government.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1189, 14 Feb 62.

13 Feb 62

During a conversation with US Embassy representatives in London, two officials of the Foreign Office sketched their "tentative" and "uncleared" thoughts regarding the current Thai attitude toward SEATO. The two British officials said that if the Thai leaders were sincerely obsessed with fear for the security of their country, the US and UK should seek means of reassuring them. The primary means of doing this might be to emphasize that Thailand's position under SEATO could not properly be compared to that of Laos. While Laos was a SEATO "designated area," Thailand was a signatory member of the pact and was indeed the only member country on the mainland of Asia. SEATO was in fact designed to protect Thailand, and the SEATO nations, including the UK, could be expected to come to that country's defense in case of Communist aggression. Various measures might be adopted to underscore the US-UK determination in this matter, such as "drawing up realistic and adequate plans" for the defense of Thailand, prepositioning troops in



the country if Sarit wanted them there, stockpiling military supplies in Thailand, and providing assistance in the antisubversion field. At the same time, the Thai Government should be advised that changing the voting procedure within SEATO would really alter nothing in a way helpful to Thai security. In any event, the British felt strongly that it would be unacceptable to have SEATO voting operate differently from NATO and CENTO voting. (See item 20 February 1962.)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3017, 14 Feb 62.

14 Feb 62

The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to memoranda from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), 5 December 1961 (see item), and the Acting Secretary of Defense, 26 December (see item), requesting recommendations on the withdrawal of US military personnel from Laos when required by the conclusion of an international agreement. The JCS called attention to the views expressed on the situation in Laos in their memorandum of 5 January 1962 (see item), and added that withdrawal of US military personnel and equipment from the existing Royal Lao Government, prior to the verified withdrawal of the parallel Communist assistance to the enemy, could have a far-reaching impact on the future of Southeast Asia. Hence the JCS had "serious reservations regarding the premature withdrawal of US military assistance from the RLG." With this point in mind, they considered that:

1. Assuming no unforeseen protocol requirements hinder the movement, the overt physical withdrawal of personnel and US-owned operational equipment could be accomplished administratively without great difficulty. It should be conducted in a routine manner and with a minimum of publicity.
2. "Practical complications" did not favor adoption of the suggestion of the Acting Secretary of Defense that MAAG personnel be organized into a provisional tactical unit and evacuate by stages across Laos to South Viet Nam. During the relatively short time that would be available, most US military personnel would be fully occupied in effecting an orderly close-out of facilities and evacuation of equipment, and in any event it was desirable for them to remain with the FAR as long as practicable.
3. Individual personnel should be attached to JUSMAG Thailand as required in order to conduct residual activities of MAAG Laos.
4. To maintain the maximum operational capability of the FAR until the Lao Army was reconstituted, all MAP equipment should remain initially with the FAR, but all US-owned operational equipment should in general be withdrawn with the departure of US military personnel.
5. Some items of US-owned equipment should, upon recommendation by CINCPAC, be transferred to MAP to permit retention by the FAR during the transition period.



6. Political arrangements should be made to recapture MAP equipment in excess of Lao requirements when the FAR forces were reconstituted, and every effort should be made to prevent it from falling into Communist hands.

7. The US should retain control of the 30-day reserve stocks of ammunition, ordnance, and other supplies for the FAR stored in Thailand (SALT SHAKER) and should maintain them until it was determined that they would not be needed in Laos.

By a message of the same date, the JCS provided CINCPAC with guidance along the foregoing lines, and with the additional information that the MAAG withdrawal should be planned to take place within from 32 to 75 days of an international agreement establishing a neutral Laos. The JCS requested CINCPAC's plan and recommendations as soon as practicable (see item 2 March 1962).

(S) JCSM-110-62 for SecDef, "Withdrawal of US Military Personnel from Laos," 14 Feb 62, derived from (S) JCS 2344/32, 5 Feb 62; (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 3289, 14 Feb 62; all in JMF 9155.2/3100 (5 Dec 61).

14 Feb 62

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the Chairman, JCS, that the concern he had expressed on 6 February (see item) regarding half-pay for FAR troops had been made known to the State Department. The State Department recognized the necessity of providing for the welfare of FAR troops and had made the half-pay proposal in the belief that even on this basis the annual income of the Lao soldier would be well above the country average. However, the State Department was willing to consider other arrangements and was awaiting comments from the Ambassador and Country Team on the draft instructions. The State Department had assured ISA that before final instructions on relations with a Souvanna government were issued they would be coordinated with the DOD as far as military matters were concerned and that additional comments would be welcome at that time.

(S) JCS 2344/35, 16 Feb 62.

15 Feb 62

The US Army Attache in Vientiane reported to ACSI that FAR officers had stopped attending his Thursday night movies, had become aloof at social functions, had ceased to visit his office voluntarily, and were no longer asking to accompany him on trips in attache aircraft. Further, he was now required to go through channels to visit the Ministry of Security, and often experienced delay. The Army Attache believed this growing coolness and deterioration of relations to be a reaction to US policy. The tendencies had appeared after the Princes' conference in December and had become pronounced after the delay in releasing January aid funds. They were more noticeable in Vientiane than in the field. MAAG personnel, according to the

Attache, were encountering a similar, although less developed, situation and were finding FAR officers less responsive to advice.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to ACSI, DA IN 203829, 15 Feb 62.

16 Feb 62 Souvanna arrived in Luang Prabang for his scheduled audience with King Savang. Also gathered at the Royal capital for possible consultations were General Phoumi, the three ICC Commissioners, and the US, British, French, Soviet, and Australian Ambassadors. Princes Boun Oum and Souphanouvong were not in attendance.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1170, 16 Feb 62;

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1201, 22 Feb 62.

16 Feb 62 An appraisal of Communist objectives, capabilities and intentions in Southeast Asia was prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency in collaboration with the intelligence organizations of the military services and was delivered to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, JCS, for their use on a trip to Hawaii.

According to the appraisal, the Communists apparently viewed South Viet Nam and Thailand as the primary targets for their long-range objective of removing all vestiges of US influence and presence in the area and of establishing national regimes under Communist hegemony. In the short-run, Laos was important to the Communists as a means of applying military pressure on Thailand and of infiltrating and subverting South Viet Nam.

It was not believed that the Communists had a firm timetable for achieving their objective. With respect to Laos, their minimum short-term objectives had been generally satisfied at the time of the cease-fire in May 1961. The disorganization and disheartened state of the Lao Army permitted off-road movement by Communists to go virtually unchallenged even in localities nominally under government control. The Communists probably would not overtly or covertly commit themselves militarily in Laos so long as there appeared a reasonable chance of gaining an international agreement neutralizing the country as a potential base of Free World operations against North Viet Nam while they continued to use it as a base of Communist operations against South Viet Nam. It was not believed that the Chinese Communists, in spite of their capability to do so at any time, would commit overt military aggression in Laos, nor was it expected that the North Vietnamese would commit large-scale overt aggression with readily identifiable combat units except in response to a Western intervention that appeared to them to threaten North Viet Nam.

It was estimated that antigovernment forces totalled about 38,000, comprising approximately 6,000 Kong Le, 4,000 Kham Ouane, 19,000 Pathet Lao, and 9,000 North Vietnamese, the latter having a minimum of 10 infantry battalions plus supporting engineers,

artillery, AA artillery and armor. According to the DIA appraisal, the combat effectiveness of the Pathet Lao, Kong Le and Kham Ouane forces was considerably less than that of the North Vietnamese units and perhaps generally less than that of the average FAR forces. The decisive factor in Communist military successes had been the use of North Vietnamese troops in critical tactical situations. Although outnumbered by the FAR, the antigovernment forces now had a superiority in artillery and armor. Without further external reinforcement, they could maintain their main forward positions, conduct local operations to counter aggressive actions by government troops, and, by concentrating forces, seize and hold certain key positions from the FAR. If reinforced with additional North Vietnamese combat units, the enemy could quickly overrun all of Laos.

Three general courses of action were open to the Communists: 1) to maintain the status quo by restricting their activity to minor actions designed to maintain their LOC and to develop control in the rear areas; 2) to undertake limited local attacks and counterattacks designed to maintain or improve their front-line positions and to disrupt FAR efforts to encroach on Communist-held areas; 3) to open a major offensive designed to overrun the remainder of Laos. In conjunction with any one of these courses, the Communists could intensify guerrilla activities in government-held areas.

It was believed that the Communists would continue along. Although reasonably satisfied with the status quo, the Communists had reinforced their troops with additional North Vietnamese combat units and staged local counter attacks in recent weeks. The DIA did not see in the pattern any indication of a Communist effort to develop a general offensive.

(For further development of the above appraisal, as SNIE 10-62, see item 21 February 1962.)

(S) DIA Estimate, "Appraisal of Communist Objectives, Capabilities and Intentions in Southeast Asia," 16 Feb 62; (S) Memo, Dir DIA, for Dir JS, "Estimate of Communist Objectives in Southeast Asia (C)," 21 Feb 62; both in JMF 9150/2200 (16 Feb 62).

16 Feb 62

In Washington, British Ambassador Ormsby Gore conferred with Harriman to discuss the proposed Foreign Office instructions to MacDonald for the latter's anticipated meeting with Pushkin on the 19th (in actuality this meeting did not occur, since Pushkin did not return to Geneva). Anticipating that Pushkin would ascribe responsibility for the deadlock in Laos to the RLG and also to the United States, MacDonald was instructed to avoid arguments over responsibility and blame. Instead, he was to propose that the Communists cease limiting the operations of the ICC and to state that Lord Home felt that the Co-Chairmen should utilize

their position to go to Laos in 7-10 days, there "to advise and assist in reaching final settlement." He was also to state that Home had suggested to Harriman, who had accepted, that the latter personally go to Laos to intensify the pressures leading to a settlement.

Harriman agreed to these instructions, subject to certain minor revisions of timing; these the British accepted.

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, FECON 766, 16 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62

In an audience granted to Ambassador Brown, King Savang said that he had urged both Phoumi and Souvanna to negotiate at length and in good faith. On the question of the allocation of the Defense and Interior Ministries, however, the King refused to commit himself, although Brown reverted to this point several times. In response to a question from Brown, the King said that Phoumi had presented his proposal for a government of six councils headed by the King (see items 25 January and 9 February 1962); the King had rejected it. He was emphatically opposed to this scheme, which he termed unconstitutional, and to any of the other proposed solutions that would involve the King in active direction of the government, except in an emergency precipitated by civil war and invasion.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1178, 18 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62

At a meeting with Souvanna in Luang Prabang, Phoumi refused to agree to control of the Defense and Interior Ministries by neutralists in a coalition government. It was agreed, however, that Souvanna would come to Vientiane for further talks (see item 22 February 1962).

At a later meeting between Souvanna and the US, British, French, and Australian Ambassadors, Ambassador Brown told Souvanna that the US desired a government that included Phoumi, who could be of "very great help" to Souvanna. Souvanna agreed. The US would continue its efforts in this direction but, as Phoumi probably would not yield on the question of the Defense and Interior Ministries, it would be necessary, if the US was to be fully effective in its support, for Souvanna to produce a cabinet slate the United States could endorse. Souvanna agreed to deliver such a list on his arrival in Vientiane.

During his meeting with the Ambassadors, Souvanna denied that his residing in Khang Khay indicated any alliance with the Pathet Lao. On the other hand, as he had previously told Phoumi, he could not unite with Phoumi against the Pathet Lao because such an act would clearly divide the country. Souvanna said that whereas he exercised control in regions where his troops were predominant or even present, he had no control whatsoever over areas where the Pathet Lao were alone. Since there were no Souvanna troops at Nam Tha,

the Pathet Lao controlled the situation completely. Souvanna said that Soviet Ambassador Abramov, at his urging, had tried to persuade Souphanouvong to restrain the Pathet Lao troops around Nam Tha. The most that Abramov could obtain was Souphanouvong's promise "to think it over." In short, Souvanna seemed thoroughly aware of the necessity of avoiding hostilities at Nam Tha during negotiations, but he also was, "admittedly and clearly, wholly dependent on Souphanouvong as to what in fact happens."

In addition to attempting to clarify his relationship with the Pathet Lao, Souvanna expressed his appreciation of the approach made to him on behalf of the Western Allies and offered suggestions regarding the manner in which the US should exert pressure on Phoumi. Souvanna urged that US financial support not be withheld in a manner that would prevent the FAR from being paid, since he did not want to risk defections and disloyalty in the army. Preferably, US pressure should consist of withholding military supplies and withdrawing military advisers.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1176, 1182, 19 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62 After two relatively quiet days, the enemy shelled Nam Tha with six rounds of 120-mm. mortar fire, causing considerable damage.

The FAR forces had been further reinforced on 11-12-13 February, when two companies of the 1st Parachute Battalion were dropped in the area. During this time and again on 14 February, patrol activity on both sides had resulted in several small actions, while the airfield and FAR positions were subjected to sporadic shelling.

Elsewhere in Laos, the pattern of patrol engagements, ambushes and exchanges of mortar fire was being duplicated.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 202210, 13 Feb 62; DA IN 202523, 14 Feb 62; DA IN 203135, 15 Feb 62; DA IN 203807, 16 Feb 62; DA IN 203897, 17 Feb 62; DA IN 204041, 19 Feb 62.

17 Feb 62 CINCPAC requested that CHMAAG Laos ~~report on the feasibility and possible means of harassing Viet Minh troops moving through the Mu Gia and Nape passes connecting central Laos and North Viet Nam.~~

CINCPAC desired specific comments upon: 1) the human "assets," whether Meo, Kha, or "other," that could be gathered for such an operation; 2) the amount of external assistance that the operation would require; 3) the extent to which the operation could be supported by helicopter or helio-courier; and 4) the probable effectiveness of the operation in relieving Viet Minh pressures upon South Viet Nam, northeastern Thailand, and southern Laos. (See item 23 February 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 170411Z Feb 62.

- 17 Feb 62 The Voice of America began a schedule of broadcasts to Southeast Asia in the Lao and Thai languages.  
(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLVI (5 Mar 62),
- 18 Feb 62 Ambassador Young delivered to Foreign Minister Thanat a letter from the Secretary of State discussing US-Thai relations and, in particular, assessing SEATO's role in Thai security (for Young's recommendation that such a letter be sent, see item 10 February 1962). The Secretary of State noted several points he considered fundamental with respect to SEATO: in spite of imperfections, SEATO had been successful in deterring overt Communist aggression into the Treaty area; the US regarded a multilateral collective security pact such as SEATO as being greater than the sum of its parts, supporting and strengthening--not hampering--the individual efforts of the member nations; and SEATO was the essential and only instrument by which US obligations with respect to the security of Thailand were, within the US constitutional system, given legal validity and substance.

Secretary Rusk then reiterated the "solemn statement" already made to the Thai Government by Ambassador Young that the United States would give full effect to its obligations under Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Treaty. It was the US view that this obligation to come to the defense of Thailand was not subject to the prior consent of any other SEATO member. It would be important, nevertheless, that as many SEATO members as possible participate in any SEATO action.

The Secretary of State also told Thanat that the US had given careful consideration to Thai proposals for changing SEATO voting procedures but doubted that any such changes would in fact increase Thailand's sense of security and confidence. With respect to Thailand's security against Communist aggression by means other than armed attack, the Secretary pointed to US action in South Viet Nam. There was no reason to believe that the US would do less for Thailand than for South Viet Nam in similar circumstances. The Secretary noted, however, that the SEATO pact provided "an important basis" for the US action in South Viet Nam; it was important that the US not be deprived of this basis for action.

The Secretary of State informed Thanat that he was prepared to join in considering "a suitable form" in which to express the above assurances publicly. In particular, he invited the Foreign Minister to come to Washington for discussions with the President and the Secretary in the near future. Finally, Secretary Rusk suggested that it would be preferable to postpone the SEATO Council meeting that was scheduled in Paris in April.

Upon receiving the letter, Foreign Minister Thanat made several preliminary comments to Ambassador Young. Thanat greatly appreciated the US expressions of friendship and assured Young that Thailand regarded the US as a "great and good friend." He agreed to the "indefinite" postponement of the SEATO Council meeting and said he

would immediately consult with his government regarding the Secretary's invitation to come to Washington. (His acceptance was formally confirmed on 23 February; for discussions during this visit, see items 2, 3, 5, and 6 March 1962.)

In instructions accompanying his letter, the Secretary of State had advised Ambassador Young that the parallel letter from CINCPAC to his Thai military counterpart that Young had suggested did not appear necessary at present, but that CINCPAC's scheduled visit to Bangkok early in March would provide an excellent opportunity for emphasizing the validity of SEATO as a military alliance. (See item 5 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1232, 17 Feb 62; (C) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1230, 16 Feb 62, Bangkok to SecState, 1227, 18 Feb 62; 1260, 23 Feb 62.

19 Feb 62 Ambassador Brown informed Phoumi that he had been in direct contact with Souvanna with regard to the formation of a neutralist government and had told him that the Western powers still supported a government of national union under his leadership, provided he could produce a satisfactory cabinet. He should, therefore, produce a specific state of names. The US, Brown informed Phoumi, still believed that the posts of Defense and Interior should be held by the center. Both Souvanna and the US continued to believe that Phoumi should be a member of a coalition government in which he would make, with Souvanna, a very effective combination to serve the best interests of the country.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1182, 19 Feb 62.

19-28  
Feb 62

The Conference remained quiescent, as more delegates continued to leave Geneva, including both Quinim Pholsena and Phoumi Vongvichit, who left for Laos on 28 February, in order, presumably, to be present during what was expected to be a crucial phase in the formation of a cabinet.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1127, 1 Mar 62.

20 Feb 62

A representative of the US Embassy in London called at the Foreign Office to ask if the views expressed informally by British officials on 13 February (see item) regarding possible UK assurances to Thailand under SEATO constituted an official British position. If this was so, the State Department instructions ran, the Embassy was to urge the Foreign Office to inform the Thai Government as soon as possible, thus backing up the US position on SEATO recently set forth in Secretary Rusk's letter to the Thai Foreign Minister (see item 18 February 1962). The Foreign Office spokesman replied, however, that consideration of possible British assurances to Thailand had just begun and that, among other things, the probable opposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to any new commitments would have to be overcome. Therefore, quick arrival at an official position must not be expected.

[For the period through 30 April 1962, no information indicating further steps in the development of a British



position has been discovered by the Historical Division.]

(S) Msgs, SecState to London, 4440, 19 Feb 62;  
London to SecState, 3102, 20 Feb 62.

21 Feb 62

SNIE 10-62 assessed "Communist Objectives, Capabilities, and Intentions in Southeast Asia." The report concluded that the long-range objectives of the Communist Bloc in SEA were to eliminate US influence and presence and to establish Communist regimes throughout the area. Although the Communists efforts apparently followed no predetermined timetable or priority listing, it was believed that Laos and South Viet Nam were now the priority targets. In Thailand, the initial effort of Communist China and North Viet Nam would probably be directed toward increasing their subversive potential, particularly in the northeastern frontier area. Concurrently, the Soviet Union would continue to employ a combination of political pressures, military threats, and economic inducements to persuade the Thai Government to seek accommodation with the Bloc and adopt a more neutral policy. The neutralist positions of Cambodia and Burma were acceptable to the Communists; the report estimated that Communist activity in both countries would, therefore, probably remain at low key.

The SNIE estimated that the large ground forces of Communist China were capable of overrunning SEA and defeating the combined indigenous armed forces of the area, while the North Vietnamese forces were superior in quality to those of any other mainland SEA state. It was not believed, however, that the Communists intended to achieve their objectives in SEA by any large-scale military aggression but rather through subversion, political action, and support of "national liberation" struggles, thereby minimizing risk of Western, particularly US, military intervention. In Laos, for example, the Communists were unlikely to risk US military intervention so long as they believed that their objectives in Laos could be achieved by legal, political means. Should a military showdown occur between the RLG and Communist forces, however, the Communist side would win out, introducing additional forces from North Viet Nam if necessary.

The SNIE observed that over the past several years there had been a clear pattern of increasing Communist military, paramilitary, and political capabilities for pursuing Communist objectives in Southeast Asia, particularly in Laos and South Viet Nam. It was noted that "the Communist almost certainly believe that by sapping the independence of Laos they will be advancing their interests in Thailand as well."

(S) SNIE 10-62, 21 Feb 62.

22 Feb 62

Souvanna replied to Harriman's letter (see item 12 February 1962), which had expressed US willingness to deal directly with the Prince regarding the formation of a coalition government. After expressing his thanks to Harriman, Souvanna stated his great concern at the delay in forming a new government. This lack of progress, he believed, was due to his failure to convince the RLG of



the necessity that it renounce its claim to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Souvanna and Souphanouvong definitely would not agree to the RLG's controlling these vital posts.

Souvanna then indicated his appreciation of the US efforts to force the Boun Oum government to yield the two cabinet posts. He warned, however, that Phoumi should neither be "forced to the point of a break" nor excluded from the coalition. The objective, Souvanna continued, was to form a unified government representing all factions rather than to alienate any group or its leader.

The Nam Tha incident, Souvanna maintained, had been greatly exaggerated. According to Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao had merely driven back FAR units which, in violation of the cease-fire, had captured Muong Sai and Namou. Since the Pathet Lao forces had regained the positions they had held in May 1961, they would cease their operations unless the FAR again attacked. Souvanna added that he had, to no avail, urged Phoumi to restrain his troops. The situation, however, had remained calm for a week, and to make sure it would remain quiet, Souvanna had asked Ambassador Brown to take such steps as necessary to prevent further RLG provocations.

In closing, Souvanna declared that, before surrendering his mandate, he would make one last effort to "solve our national problem."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1205, 22 Feb 62.

22 Feb 62

Souvanna, who had arrived in Vientiane the day before, presented to Ambassador Brown a cabinet list that was unacceptable to the US. This list of 18 names included four Pathet Lao, four RLG and ten neutralists, seven of whom were political adherents of Souvanna and three of who were not (the so-called Vientiane neutrals). Souvanna, in addition to being listed as Premier, was also designated Minister of Defense. Phoumi and Souphanouvong were both to be Vice Premiers; the former would also be Minister of Education, Sports and Youth, and the latter would be Minister of Economics and Planning.

US objections to Souvanna's slate were as follows:

1. It was based on the total of 18 members agreed upon by the three Princes at Geneva and upon Souphanouvong's formula for the center of seven Souvanna neutrals and three Vientiane neutrals (see item 19 January 1962). Further, only two of the three so listed were genuine Vientiane neutrals. The US preferred a cabinet of 19, with the center divided six and five, or at the minimum six and four. The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to insist upon a 19-man cabinet with a center divided six and five and to fall back to an 18-man cabinet with a center of six and four if necessary.

2. The slate, as submitted, would give the Pathet Laos an excellent opportunity to dominate all normal contacts between the government and the civil population.

This domination would be brought about through the naming of Pathet Lao as the Ministers of Economy, Planning and Finance, the Deputy Minister of Information, and by the naming of a Deputy Minister of Interior with reported Pathet Lao leanings.

3. Pathet Lao domination of Economy and Planning would make economic assistance by the US extremely difficult. It was essential to have a Secretary of State in this Ministry from the RLG faction as a balance to Souphanouvong as Minister.

Later in the day, Souvanna gave his list to Phoumi. (See item 24 February 1962 for Phoumi's reaction.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1208, 22 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 757, 22 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 After conferring among themselves, the US, British, French and Australian Ambassadors met with Souvanna and, after extended discussion of US objections to Souvanna's cabinet list (see item 22 February 1962), produced a list that Souvanna accepted and agreed to discuss with Souphanouvong. This list contained 19 names divided into groups of four each for the left and right and eleven for the center. This eleven included seven Souvanna and four Vientiane neutrals. There were, in addition, a rightist and a Vientiane neutral, both with cabinet rank, assigned to the Premier's office.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1212, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 Ambassador Thompson informed the Secretary of State that Ambassador Roberts and the Soviet Ambassador to Laos had traveled on the same plane from Paris to Moscow. According to Roberts, Abramov had appeared satisfied that the difficulties over the formation of a Laotian government would be resolved. He had expressed confidence in US policy as expressed by Brown in Laos and in Harriman and the State Department, but he had "doubts as to whether CIA supported US policy."

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2265, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 During the preceding week, the reinforcement of Nam Tha with the 1st Parachute Battalion had been resumed and completed, making a total of six FAR battalions in the area opposed to an estimated equal number of enemy battalions.

On 20 February, the enemy had directed small arms and mortar fire on a unit of the 2d Infantry Battalion in the Nam Tha perimeter. This was the first enemy action reported since 17 February (see item). The FAR forces had utilized the lull to make minor advances in an attempt to expand the defense perimeter.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 204525, 20 Feb 62; DA IN 204905, 21 Feb 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP #8-62, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62 Attempting to insure its participation in a US Governmental program giving new world-wide attention to civic action programs (see item 12 February 1962), the Laos Country Team recommended to the Secretary of State that a civic action program be initiated on a priority basis among the Kha tribesmen of the Bolovens Plateau. The

Country Team believed that US efforts to secure the firm loyalties of the Kha were dependent for success not only upon the formation of ADC units but upon economic development projects as well. If the Kha were successfully wooed, they would constitute a potentially effective barrier to Viet Minh traversal of the "Ho Chi Minh trail." Moreover, since the Bolovens Plateau was infiltrated by Pathet Lao but not by Kong Le forces, the Kha could be used by Souvanna as an anti-Communist force without weakening his political and military strength. These development projects could be conducted as civic action "self-help" programs, the Country Team concluded, by using to the maximum extent possible the indigenous military units created by MAAG.

The Country Team reported that a survey of area needs showed that road and airstrip construction, creation of an agricultural marketing cooperative, a trade school, and a dispensary, and assignment of a locally hired agricultural advisor--projects with a total initial cost of \$92,150--could be initiated soon and at least partially completed during Fiscal Year 1962. USOM Laos did not feel that it was authorized by its present terms of reference to undertake such a program; USOM was also reluctant to send its civilian technicians into such an insecure area. MAAG Laos, on the other hand, probably had the capability to initiate the program and was willing to assume responsibility for it, but had no funds. The Country Team recommended therefore that MAAG Laos have the initial responsibility for planning, programming and implementing the program, with USOM merely funding the commodity and local labor costs involved. USOM should, however, be authorized by AID Washington to begin participating in the program as soon as possible so that it would take over it the MAAG was withdrawn from Laos. The Country Team recommended further that, if consideration of any of the individual projects of the program should cause difficulty or delay in the authorization of funds, these should be set aside for the time being lest there be a delay in the initiation of other projects. (See item 22, 29 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1211, 23 Feb 62.

23 Feb 62

CHMAAG Laos responded to CINCPAC's request for an evaluation of the feasibility and possible means of harassing Viet Minh troops moving through Mu Gia and Nape passes connecting central Laos with North Viet Nam (see item 17 February 1962). In the opinion of CHMAAG, both passes could be effectively interdicted by Lao guerrilla forces. These forces could crater roads, ambush, and lay anti-vehicle and antipersonnel mines, thereby slowing the flow of supplies, forcing the enemy to divert substantial forces to protect his line of communication, and perhaps causing him ultimately to abandon the routes altogether.

In the case of Mu Gia pass, there were no Meo in the vicinity, and the few Kha were heavily infiltrated with Pathet Lao sympathizers. However, [REDACTED] with MAAG support, had already trained 75 Lao from the area, where they now formed the nucleus of three separate guerrilla groups with a total strength of 300. These

groups had already demonstrated the ability to collect intelligence, harass the enemy, and attract recruits. When and if they found a safe base area, on which to build a "helio" strip and from which to recruit additional troops, a PARU team would be sent in. In the way of assistance, these groups would need the same materials they were presently receiving: weapons and ammunition, communication gear, food, and money. This assistance could be delivered by helicopter or helio-courier to those forces north of Route 12 (the highway running through Mu Gia pass) once a helio strip was constructed, but the area south of Route 12 was probably too thickly infested with Pathet Lao to make a helio strip practicable. At any rate, for the time being air drop appeared to be the most feasible means of delivery.

Near Nape Pass there were three Meo villages of either unknown or Pathet Lao sympathies; moreover, the Pathet Lao had been very active with construction and propaganda programs in the area. There was, however, a group of 25 Lao trained [redacted] who would soon enter the area with a PARU team and attempt to recruit an additional 200 Lao, if an already dispatched advance party could locate a secure base area. At its base area, the group would then receive arms and ammunition, food, and other equipment, be given further training, and if possible, afforded medical evacuation service. The group would have some trouble finding a suitable site for a helio strip in its area, because of an increasing Pathet Lao presence.

(TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 231130Z Feb 62.

24 Feb 62

In a memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Joint Strategic Survey Council declared that "denial of Laos to the communists as an avenue of infiltration into South Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia should be commonly understood as the over-all US objective in Laos, toward which all pertinent United States policies and efforts, political and military, should be oriented." JSSC recommended that the JCS adopt this position in discussions of the US over-all objective in Laos.

Currently the United States was seeking to halt Communist expansion by creating a neutral government in Laos that would make it a buffer state. JSSC believed that insufficient consideration was being given to additional or alternative measures that would become necessary should the diplomatic effort fail. In that event, military action between the Communist and anti-Communist forces in the area would determine the fate of Laos. Since the local anti-Communist forces could not control the access routes alone, plans involving varying kinds and degrees of US and Allied military support should be prepared. Hence JSSC recommended that "active planning and preparation within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff be directed toward measures necessary to at least secure the Laotian approaches to South Viet Nam, Thailand, and Cambodia, in event current measures prove insufficient to achieve this objective."

On 28 February the JCS agreed to use the JSSC memorandum as a talking paper for a meeting with the President the following day. At the same time, they returned it to JSSC (Southeast Asia Study Group) for consideration in connection with the review of the CNO's memorandum of 5 February (see item). (For the Study Group's report, see item 9 March 1962.)

(S) JCS 2344/36, 24 Feb 62; (C) Note by Secy JCS to Control Div, 28 Feb 62; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

24 Feb 62 In a conversation with Soviet Charge Scorucov in Vientiane, Brown stressed the importance of bringing both Phoumi and Souphanouvong to agree to Souvanna's revised cabinet slate (see item 23 February 1962). The United States accepted responsibility for trying to induce Phoumi to concede Defense and Interior to the center group, but it would expect the Soviets at the same time to exert parallel influence on Souphanouvong to accept the Souvanna package, acquiescing in the inclusion of a strong and balanced center group. "Scorucov indicated agreement." The two conferees also agreed that "every effort should be made to keep things quiet at Nam Tha at this juncture."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1213, 24 Feb 62.

24 Feb 62 In an interview with Souvanna, Phoumi rejected Souvanna's original cabinet list (the one also rejected by the US; see item 22 February 1962). He objected that the neutralist center representation was unbalanced in favor of Souvanna's faction and contained two unacceptable pro-Communists, Quinim and Sisoumang. Souvanna denied that the two were pro-Communist. Phoumi declared that Souvanna could not be Prime Minister because he could not control the Pathet Lao. Souvanna replied that he had never claimed such control except in places where he had some independent forces. He then gave Phoumi his revised cabinet list (see item 23 February 1962). Phoumi countered with his own proposal for a government of six councils presided over by the King (see item 9 February 1962).

Souvanna, after recounting the above to Ambassador Brown, said that his next move would be to return to Khang Khay to discuss with Souphanouvong the revised list and Phoumi's proposal for a King's government. He thought it possible that Souphanouvong might accept Phoumi's scheme. If, however, he refused it but accepted the revised cabinet list, Souvanna would then present the list, as his final proposal, to Phoumi. If Phoumi rejected it, Souvanna would go to the King and advise him of the situation.

Brown, as instructed by the Secretary of State, told Souvanna that the United States would support the revised cabinet slate. Therefore, if Phoumi refused Souvanna's list after approval by Souphanouvong, the Western Ambassadors would carry out the agreed plan (see item 6 February 1962); they would follow up Souvanna's report to the King with parallel representations to the monarch supporting the list and declaring it to be the only acceptable alternative. Brown expressed doubt about the

practicability of Phoumi's six-councils proposal and the King's willingness to serve, but he told Souvanna that if the scheme proved acceptable to all three Princes and the King, the United States would also accept it. Brown advised Souvanna of his conversation with Scorucov earlier on 24 February (see item), in which the Soviet diplomat had appeared to accept responsibility for influencing Souphanouvong to agree to Souvanna's revised list. Brown told Souvanna he thought the "Soviets might be helpful to him if he needed them," and Souvanna replied that he would invoke their help if necessary.

Souvanna wished the United States for the present to withhold any further pressure or sanctions on Phoumi. Brown endorsed this course in his report to the Secretary of State, saying that the situation had reached a point where "we can only go to bat with Phoumi once and then we must do it with full force." The time for this would be when a cabinet list, agreed between Souvanna and Souphanouvong and acceptable to the United States, was in hand.

Later in the day, Phoumi informed Hasey that he could not accept the revised cabinet slate presented by Souvanna that morning. For that matter, said Phoumi, he would not accept any government headed by Souvanna. Hasey then counseled Phoumi that US policy was firm and that he must realize that no civil or military aid would be forthcoming if he did not go along with a Souvanna government that proved acceptable to the other parties. Phoumi requested that such a US decision be sent him in writing, but Hasey replied that Phoumi had been sufficiently forewarned. Phoumi then declared that the only proper solution was his own King-and-six-councils scheme, and he asked that the United States openly support it. He planned to go to Luang Prabang the following day to persuade the King to take an active role in achieving this solution. Phoumi was confident that the King would accept.

Summing up the day's activities for the Secretary of State, Brown said it was now clear that Phoumi would not under current circumstances accept a coalition government under Souvanna. If Souvanna was able to present a cabinet list agreed to by Souphanouvong and the US, the United States would shortly be faced with:

"A) decision as to whether and how we break once and for all with Phoumi, and

B) problem of how, in such case, to patch together a Souvanna government without Phoumi and his close friends, and

C) how we preserve the peace while all this is going on."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1214, 1216, 24 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 762, 23 Feb 62.

25 Feb 62

Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, requested comment on certain steps he believed the US would have to take, and upon certain contingencies that



might arise, in the event that Souphanouvong agreed to a cabinet slate acceptable to the US. Under these circumstances, the Ambassador believed that the US Government and Souvanna would have to win acceptance of the slate from both the King and Phoumi. Should Phoumi refuse, the US would be forced to apply sanctions to make him reconsider. If he remained obdurate, he would have to be eliminated from the Lao political scene.

Having stated what the US would have to do, Ambassador Brown proposed a specific sequence for the US to follow if Phoumi rejected a slate of cabinet officers acceptable to both Souvanna and Souphanouvong as well as to the US. In making his proposal, the Ambassador declared that "our sanctions must now enter the military area," since this was judged to be Phoumi's "main source of strength."

Initially, Phoumi would be: 1) urged privately to agree, and assured that Western military and economic aid would be proffered to the new government; 2) told that the King would be informed that this particular slate was the only solution the US could accept; and 3) advised that US military and financial assistance would be given only to Souvanna's coalition. Phoumi would then be asked to reply within 48 hours.

If, as seemed most likely, Phoumi refused, the US would then suspend all deliveries of military aid and withdraw its military advisors together with all air support, except for those planes delivering food to isolated FAR or Meo units. These measures, Brown recommended, should be accompanied by a policy of, at the least, hindering the RLG's access to its financial reserves. The withdrawal of Filipino technicians, however, was not recommended, nor were US relief and rescue operations to be halted.

The suspension of military aid, the Ambassador conceded would have an adverse effect on the capabilities of the FAR, would deny the US intelligence of both FAR and enemy operations, and would deprive the US of control over the FAR. In addition, once the US advisors had been withdrawn, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reintroduce them. Finally, the recall of the advisors would not be accompanied by any corresponding withdrawal on the part of the Communists.

Because of the damage that would be inflicted upon the combat capabilities of the FAR, the US, Ambassador Brown believed, would have to be prepared for increased military pressure by the Pathet Lao. Other contingencies that might occur were the possible need to find satisfactory replacements to fill vacancies in the proposed cabinet if Phoumi refused to participate, and the possibility of a direct confrontation between Phoumi and Souphanouvong if Souvanna, because of Phoumi's stubbornness, abandoned his attempt to form a coalition. Finally, the US should seek a peaceful means to expel the existing RLG in the event that Phoumi and his followers managed to maintain themselves in power.

Ambassador Brown, with the concurrence of the Country Team, believed that the proposed measures were unlikely to force Phoumi to participate in a Souvanna government and that the sanctions would be slow in eliminating Phoumi from the political scene, but he was convinced that a less drastic program would have no chance at all to succeed.

The Secretary of State, in commenting upon Ambassador Brown's plan, said that the proposed sequence of actions moved too rapidly to military sanctions. The basic purpose of US policy, Secretary Rusk pointed out, was to retain in the Souvanna government sufficient right-wing military and political strength to offset the power of the Pathet Lao. Thus, the US should exhaust the other means of exerting pressure on Phoumi before imposing military sanctions that could lessen the ability of the right-wing faction to resist the Pathet Lao.

The Secretary of State then offered the following specific comments:

1. The Ambassador should, operating within the wide latitude he had been given, "urgently reconsider using the various carrot proposals we have made with the aim of producing the carrot and stick combination with the strongest psychological impact on Phoumi."
2. Phoumi should be reminded that, since Souvanna had expressed his intention of postponing integration and demobilization until after his government had been in office for a time, the FAR would not be disbanded before Phoumi had had sufficient time to assess the impact of Souvanna's policies and, possibly, to reach agreement with Kong Le. Furthermore, the program of integration would not place the FAR at a disadvantage and would thus insure that Phoumi would have time in which to judge the probable consequences of Souvanna's programs.
3. The Ambassador would ask for any additional financial or other authority needed to encourage, using all overt and covert means at his disposal, a group or individual willing to support a coalition headed by Souvanna.
4. The Ambassador should obtain Souvanna's advice on how to deal with Phoumi and the other Vientiane leaders. Such consultations would clarify the US shift from Phoumi to Souvanna, encourage Souvanna, and obtain for the US the "best informed advice." Ambassador Brown, however, was also to consult with Phoumi.
5. The Ambassador might wish to reconsider the idea of boycotting Phoumi (see item 1 February 1962).  
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1219, 25 Feb 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 763, 25 Feb 62.

25 Feb 62

Phoumi called John F. Hasey to his home and expressed the sincere conviction that US policy was wrong and was only leading his country into Communist slavery. For



this reason Phoumi was continuing his fight against the implementation of US policies.

After observing that the US should not try to buy loyalty, Phoumi mentioned the US decision to withhold aid and asked that the RLG be officially informed in writing that the US Government was no longer willing to support the RLG. In making this request, Phoumi acknowledged that the US could not support a regime that did not adhere to US policy.

Phoumi next produced a letter from Kong Le that urged prompt acceptance of Souvanna on the grounds that, as each day passed, more Viet Minh troops were entering Laos. He did not, however, comment upon Kong Le's statement.

Finally, Phoumi gave an account of his visit on 21 February with Sarit at Bangkok. According to Phoumi Sarit, though admitting he could not give Phoumi much support, had urged him to "keep his military force intact and 'fight to [the] death.'"

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1220, 25 Feb 62.

26 Feb 62

Commenting on the instructions received from the State Department on 25 February (see item), Ambassador Brown wrote, "Apparently we in field and officers in Department have widely different appraisal of possibilities of influencing Phoumi to fit into our program. I am convinced, as are all members of my Country Team, my British, French and Australian colleagues, Prince Souvanna and most Lao with whom we have talked, that Phoumi will not accept a government under Souvanna with Defense and Interior in Souvanna's hands, except possibly . . . under most drastic duress." This, Brown observed, was a "disagreeable, hard and dangerous fact." The President, Harriman, and the Ambassador had all attempted to appeal to Phoumi by sketching the long-term prospect of his rise to ultimate power after a period of service as a major minister in a coalition government fully supported by the West. Phoumi, however, continued to insist that a Souvanna government with Defense and Interior in the center would lead to an early Communist take-over of Laos. None of the other inducements available appeared to Brown to hold any promise of influencing Phoumi, except severe sanctions.

The State Department reply the following day acknowledged the divergence of outlook between Washington and the Vientiane Embassy. Since it was imperative that Brown have a complete and accurate picture of US policy and the thinking behind it, William Sullivan and Michael Forrestal (recently appointed assistant to White House aide McGeorge Bundy) were being sent to Vientiane to advise him.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1225, 26 Feb 62; SecState to Vientiane, 769, 27 Feb 62.

26 Feb 62

The Deputy Secretary of Defense distributed the final report of "politico-Military Game SIGMA 1-62," a war game for Southeast Asia. (This game differed from more traditional war games in that "senior policy-makers" of

the US Government participated, influenced the game play, and, the Deputy Secretary said, received "the benefits associated with full-time participation.")

(TS) Politico-Military Game SIGMA 1-62, Final Report, 26 Feb 62; JMF 3511 (12 Dec 61) sec 1A. (S) JCS 1948/53, 15 Dec 61; JMF 3511 (12 Dec 61).

28 Feb 62 After a week of inactivity, enemy patrols began probing towards FAR positions in the vicinity of Nam Tha and fired on elements of the 28th Infantry Battalion about four miles east of the town. A FAR L-20 air craft began operations from the airfield, although normal traffic remained suspended and enemy mortars were believed to be still capable of interdicting the field.

FAR forces had continued to use the preceding week's lull to push their defenses outward. A company of the 28th Battalion had engaged an enemy force seven or eight miles east of Nam Tha late on the 27th or early on 28 February.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 206951, 28 Feb 62; DA IN 207154, 1 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

In Burma the government of U Nu was overthrown by a military coup led by General Ne Win, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. General Ne Win announced the formation of a Revolutionary Council (cabinet) to rule the country. (On 7 March, in an action that constituted US recognition of the new government, Ambassador Everton delivered a note to the Burmese Foreign Office in Rangoon.)

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV (26 Mar 62), 499.

2 Mar 62

Pursuant to the JCS Message of 14 February 1962 (see item), CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to develop plans for the withdrawal of MAAG Laos within 32 to 75 days after the signing of an international agreement. In forwarding the guidance provided by JCS, CINCPAC elaborated a number of the points in fuller detail. Among other things, he asked that the planning consider the "desirability and practicability of evacuating specified Laotian personnel whose actions and value to US warrant their evacuation to Thailand or other friendly area." (See item 30 March 1962.)

CINCPAC also directed that the planning cover a further contingency not included in the JCS requirement, namely, US approval of a Lao request that elements of the MAAG continue in operation to assist the new provisional government in the regroupment, integration, and formation of the national army and the demobilization of excess forces, probably in conjunction with the ICC. The guidance CINCPAC furnished for the development of this further plan listed a number of objectives conceived with the furtherance of US interests in mind. It would be desirable, for instance, to seek the inclusion of the maximum number of personnel loyal to US interests in the reconstituted FAR, particularly in key positions. CINCPAC's guidance also suggested the organization of an intelligence capability that would report continuously the extent of Pathet Lao/Kong Le/Viet Minh compliance with agreements regarding amnesty, neutrality, and demobilization and the extent of enemy activity in infiltrating Laos or South Viet Nam through Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 207413, 2 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

During a discussion with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat in Washington, Secretary Rusk declared that the Manila Pact formed an important basis for US security relations with Southeast Asia. This Pact, Rusk continued, was one means by which the US was meeting its obligations to South Viet Nam. The US considered its obligations under this treaty to be "individual and not just collective."

Thanat replied that Thailand still believed in the principle of collective security and would be willing to continue its participation in SEATO, if it received assurances regarding the US "understanding" of the treaty. On the other hand, the Thai Government would prefer a bilateral treaty with the US, for such an

agreement would end the present embarrassment and strife caused by the presence in SEATO of such colonial powers as France and Britain. After thus expressing his Government's willingness either to ally itself directly with the US or to retain membership in a modified SEATO, Thanat asked what the US intended to do about the allegedly ineffectual treaty organization.

Secretary Rusk responded with an expression of hope that regional cooperation in Southeast Asia would continue to grow. He further indicated that an association of the countries in the area, with strong Western support, would have some advantages, although the US of course did not wish to "undermine the present arrangement." Thanat thereupon reviewed the history of the Association of Southeast Asia, which dealt with such matters as customs and transportation, and said that Burma's recently installed military regime might orient that nation toward this cooperative arrangement.

The conversation then turned to Thailand's security, as Secretary Rusk observed that prompt action was essential if more drastic future measures were to be avoided. Both Rusk and Harriman, who also was present, pledged that the US would act as promptly as possible on programs designed to strengthen Thailand's security.

In reviewing the Lao situation, Thanat warned that there were but two groups in the kingdom, the Communists and the non-Communists. He further maintained that, if the RLG were forced from power, Laos would go the way of mainland China. Secretary Rusk disagreed, expressing confidence that the Lao themselves would not be a source of trouble if foreigners, particularly the Viet Minh, left the kingdom. Harriman added that the US also believed that Kong Le and Souvanna could be persuaded to sever their ties with the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1350, 8 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62 Souvanna, in the presence of Souphanouvong, told the Chairman of the ICC that Phoumi's proposal for a government of six councils under the King was not acceptable (see items 9 and 24 February 1962). (On 13 March, Souvanna sent Boun Oum a message formally rejecting the Phoumi proposal.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1241, 2 Mar 62; 1280, 13 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62 On 2 March, representatives of the US, UK, and French Embassies in Vientiane studied the outlined cease-fire proclamation drafted by the four-power working group in Geneva on 20 January (see item) and proposed a revised outline as follows (new segments are underlined):

#### A. First Proclamation

1. Note existence of de facto cease-fire.
2. Order all parties to refrain from taking any action which might lead to resumption of hostilities.

3. Prohibit troop reinforcements and importation of further war materials.

4. Declare amnesty for activities during hostilities.

B. Second Proclamation

5. Role of ICC in supervising cease-fire in accordance with the Geneva Agreements.

6. Release of all political prisoners and detainees.

7. Release of prisoners of war of all nationalities.

8. Elimination of mines and booby traps.

9. Establishment of tripartite committees or other appropriate machinery to carry out the cease-fire arrangements, with the co-operation of the ICC, and to prepare detailed regulations providing for:

a) Regrouping of troops.

b) Unification of the armed forces into a single national army.

c) Demobilization of all forces in excess of the requirements of the single national army and collection of surplus arms.

d) Disposal of excess war material.

C. Third Proclamation

10. The necessary details of the plan for regrouping, integration and demobilization worked out under point 9 above.

The original draft was thus divided into three proclamations on the assumption that this would take better account of time factors, avoiding the possible delay that the consideration of "certain points" might impose on the issuance of a single proclamation. The first section was to be proclaimed immediately after the government was established; the second a week thereafter; and the third proclamation would include the demobilization and integration plan previously formulated (see item 20 October 1961). It was considered wise to connect the proclamations with the actual Conference documents, by having the former referred to in the preamble of the RLG neutrality declaration. (See item 7 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1239, 2 Mar 62.

2 Mar 62

Reacting to reports that approval of an expanded program for arming Kha tribesmen (see item 25 January 1962) was being delayed by technical problems in funding the program, [REDACTED] emphasized strongly to his

the importance he attached to the program. [redacted] termed the Kha program "vital" to "recapturing the initiative" in southern Laos and, particularly, establishing armed assets eastward toward South Viet Nam. Already the program was "well on the way" to securing the Bolovens Plateau, and opportunities for expanding farther eastward might be lost for lack of a source of weapons and money. The program should not be made to wait upon a determination of the manner in which it should be funded. (See item 6 March 1962.)

(S)

3 Mar 62

A letter from Prime Minister Sarit to President Kennedy was delivered by Foreign Minister Thanat during his visit to Washington. Sarit wrote that the Thai and US Governments differed over the "assessment of personalities and possible future consequences," rather than over the fundamental objectives of policy toward Laos. The Thai Government, however, aware of "certain realities and necessities," had reluctantly made a genuine effort to adjust its views to those of the United States.

Although "shocked" by the failings of SEATO, Thailand still adhered to the treaty. Sarit hoped that the President might find it possible to strengthen Thailand's sense of security by declaring, either unilaterally or jointly, that in the event of aggression or subversion against Thailand the US would cooperate with that country in the defense of its freedom and independence, without waiting for a unanimous decision by SEATO. Such a US declaration, Sarit believed, might induce other SEATO members to fulfill their obligations. Sarit had authorized Thanat to reach agreement on a joint declaration of this type during his stay in Washington (see item 6 March 1962).

Sarit commented briefly on the Bowen Report regarding opportunities for US aid to the economic development of Thailand (see item 16 January 1962). Since the report was a substantial document deserving careful study, it would be some time before the Thai Government could give its reaction.

Sarit closed by expressing the hope that President and Mrs. Kennedy could visit Thailand.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1313, 4 Mar 62.

3 Mar 62

During a conversation with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat in Washington, Harriman outlined US policy regarding Laos. There was no acceptable alternative, Harriman declared, to the US objective of a free, neutral, and independent Laos, governed by a coalition with Souvanna as its Prime Minister. Although certain risks accompanied such a policy, the US nevertheless intended to work toward this objective and to give full support to a Souvanna government in an attempt to save the kingdom from Communist domination.

The President, Harriman maintained, would not allow Phoumi, who was preventing the formation of a Lao coalition, to dictate US policy by creating conditions under which US troops would have to be committed in Laos. If Phoumi cooperated with American policy, the US would attempt to secure for him an important cabinet post; if he refused to cooperate, he would be eliminated from the political scene. Phoumi, the US believed, could play a constructive role in any coalition government by being in a position to take advantage of the rivalry between the followers of Kong Le and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi's potential role might be made easier by the fact that Souvanna was aware of the friction between the two groups.

Thanat replied that, though the Thai Government did not share the American confidence in Souvanna, it did agree on the wisdom of a peaceful solution, Thailand, therefore, would cooperate with the US and would give full and open support to US policy.

Thanat denied the reports that Sarit was urging Phoumi to "fight to the death" (see item 25 February 1962). The truth, he continued, was that Phoumi had grown so politically blind that he could not understand that he would not receive US and Thai support. Like the US, Thailand did not want its forces "sucked in" to Laos.

The major problem to be solved after the formation of the new Lao government, Thanat remarked, was the establishment of adequate safeguards against Communist seizure of the country. Chief among these safeguards was the satisfactory disposition of the factional armies. Harriman agreed, adding that, in matters such as the reduction and integration of the armies, the West intended only to match the steps taken by the Communists.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 788, 6 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

In Bangkok, Admiral Felt, Counselor Unger and Minister Martin of the US Embassy, and CHJUSMAG General Johnson called upon Sarit, who was attended by several of his advisors. Among the subjects discussed were Thanat's visit to Washington, the importance of SEATO, a personal message from President Kennedy to Sarit, intelligence of Chinese Communist activities in Laos, counterinsurgency plans, and SEATO exercises. In Unger's opinion, during this conversation Sarit maintained his previous positions on Laos and SEATO, "but with less conviction." It had appeared that the Thai Premier did not wish to enter a lengthy discussion of either SEATO or SEATO exercises until Thanat had reported the outcome of his consultations in Washington.

After an exchange of remarks indicating general satisfaction with the progress of the Washington talks, Admiral Felt spoke of the continued importance of SEATO from the military point of view. He called attention to the importance to Thailand of US bases in SEATO states such as the Philippine Republic. Sarit, however, replied that SEATO had not been useful, since "people were



continually in doubt about its role." Felt thereupon asked Sarit not to judge either SEATO's usefulness or the US willingness to defend Thailand on the basis of events in Laos. Sarit responded that the Thai people had come to view SEATO "as a mask to blind or deceive them." Admiral Felt, after mentioning the difference between political and military problems, described the purely military usefulness of the central planning being done at Bangkok. Sarit, however, observed that, although plans were being made, nothing was being done. In response, Admiral Felt, turning to a by-product of SEATO, noted that he soon would testify before the Congressional committees that dealt with MAP funds. These committees, in determining the allocation of funds, attached great significance to collective security arrangements such as SEATO.

When questioned by Admiral Felt about the situation in Laos, Sarit warned that the neglect of Laos could expose the whole of Southeast Asia to Communist conquest. A Communist-controlled Laos would facilitate the passage of Viet Minh troops into South Viet Nam and also would endanger the northern and northeastern portions of Thailand.

Admiral Felt then delivered from notes a personal message from President Kennedy to Sarit. When asked to comment upon the President's desire for a neutral and independent Laos, Sarit warned that the foremost consideration was whether Souvanna was truly neutral. Admiral Felt replied that it was important to win Souvanna's allegiance and to prevent his drifting into the Communist camp. Talk then turned to the coalition sought by the President, with Felt stressing the importance of keeping the FAR intact. If Phoumi chose to cooperate with Souvanna, the continued existence of the FAR would be more likely. Sarit observed, however, that, though Phoumi and Souvanna might agree, it was unlikely that Souphanouvong would cooperate in forming a reasonable coalition. The Thai Government, moreover, had received a secret report that Souvanna himself was considering a break with the Pathet Lao, a political development that might explain the recent inaction at Nam Tha.

Sarit next referred to reports from Phoumi that FAR radio monitors had overheard transmissions in both French and Chinese during the fighting at Nam Tha. Unger suggested that French was used because it was a language common to both the Pathet Lao and the Viet Minh. Admiral Felt then requested that US advisors be informed of all indications of Chinese intervention.

The problem of coordinating intelligence, Admiral Felt then declared, had complicated the task of fighting infiltrators and insurgents in South Viet Nam. On the basis of this experience the Admiral recommended, and Sarit agreed, that an intelligence coordination center be established in Thailand. The Prime Minister used the occasion to ask for more assistance in communications and to suggest that a special communications network be established for intelligence and counterintelligence units.



Turning to the subject of counterinsurgency planning, Admiral Felt assured Sarit that the plans prepared by JUSMAG were recommendations intended to stimulate Thai planning. General Johnson and his advisors were not trying to interfere in Thai affairs. At this point, one of Sarit's officers noted that the Thai supreme command had, in advance of JUSMAG, devised antiguerrilla and counterinsurgency plans. The Thai plans, which had by now been approved, closely resembled the later US plan. Unger added that the efforts to strengthen the border police, to encourage community development, and to execute other civil action programs formed a part of the overall countersubversion plan. Sarit replied that he understood the nature of the civil action programs but was concerned at the slow pace at which the US was carrying them out. Admiral Felt thereupon indicated that he would study the civil action plans in the light of his experience in South Viet Nam.

Returning to the general subject of SEATO, Admiral Felt expressed the hope that the organization's proposed exercises would be carried out. Sarit replied that one such exercise, AIR COBRA, had been reviewed by the Thai Air Force, which reported that the exercise was not useful and would prove too costly. Rephrasing his earlier complaint, Sarit objected that there were too many exercises, too many plans, and not enough action. Admiral Felt answered that cooperation by the US and Thai Air Forces in the support of ground troops, the purpose of AIR COBRA, would provide useful training for the airmen of both nations. The Admiral also stated that a paper had been prepared proposing the sharing of the expenses of SEATO exercises among the member nations, which he favored. Sarit, however, merely complained that his nation was always "required to contribute here and there," even to the Geneva Conference, which the Prime Minister considered valueless. The arguments presented by Felt for the carrying out of AIR COBRA--principally that military men of the two nations would profit from working together--did not seem to move Sarit. (See item 16 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1341, 6 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

Souvanna and Souphanouvong, in an interview at Khang Khay with Ambassadors Addis and Falaise, produced still another cabinet list. This list followed the same general pattern as the US-approved list of 23 February (see item): it contained 19 names, including four Pathet Lao, four RLG, seven Souvanna neutrals and four Vientiane neutrals; Souvanna was to be Premier and Phoumi and Souphanouvong were listed as Vice Premiers. The Defense and Interior Ministries were to be held by neutralists.

This latest effort at cabinetmaking was not acceptable to the United States because, through assignment of individual posts within the broad formula, the list became heavily weighted in favor of the Pathet Lao and the most leftist of the Souvanna neutrals. Further, these leftists would control most of the important ministries with direct contact with the people, such as Information, Sports, Youth, Social Action and Social Welfare. Three

of the four Vientiane neutrals, on the other hand, were nonentities. The list included no member of the prominent Sananikone family, such as Phoui or Ngou.

Ambassador Addis, however, argued with Ambassador Brown that the Western Powers should accept the list since, with the exception of Souphanouvong as Minister of Information, it was reasonably satisfactory.

In the course of the discussions with Ambassadors Addis and Falaize, Souphanouvong had stated definitely that Phoumi must be a member of the coalition government if it was to be workable. Souvanna indicated that he found it difficult to include Phoui Sananikone in the government because he had caused the arrest of Souphanouvong in 1959. When Falaize suggested that Kong Le was equally objectionable to Phoumi, Souvanna said that inclusion of Kong Le, listed as one of the Secretaries of State in Defense and Veterans, was not essential. To the suggestion that the United States might find Souphanouvong as Minister of Information very difficult to accept, Souvanna replied that the propaganda put out by that Ministry would be propaganda of the government, not of the Pathet Lao. As Prime Minister, he could personally supervise and correct it if Souphanouvong should deviate from the government line.

Both Ambassador Brown and the State Department, remembering the experience with Quinim as Minister of Information during 1960, placed little value on Souvanna's assurances regarding his ability to control Souphanouvong as Minister of Information. The State Department agreed with Brown that it was important to mobilize British and French support, in London and Paris, for the US objections to the list. The State Department had received information that Addis had already recommended to London that Souvanna's latest list be accepted "on grounds next revision might be even worse."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1248, 5 Mar 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 784, 5 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

Another meeting between Thanat and Secretary Rusk (see item 2 March 1962) got underway as the two men agreed to issue on the following day a communique dealing primarily with Thai security (see item 6 March 1962).

Thanat, referring to the possible effects of the communique, stressed the need for a public announcement regarding the next meeting of the SEATO Council. Such an announcement would forestall speculation that no meeting would be held. Secretary Rusk, however, was inclined to await clarification of the Lao situation and substantial agreement among members on the future of SEATO before calling a meeting of the Council. He added that he did not wish to attend a session that would produce nothing but disagreement. The Secretary then suggested that an informal meeting might be held when the various Foreign Ministers gathered in New York for the autumn session of the UN General Assembly. Thanat agreed that this might be possible.

The Secretary of State emphasized that the US was not surrendering its interest in Laos. The problem, he continued, was to rid the kingdom of the Viet Minh so that the US could deal with the Lao alone. Any demobilization of the FAR would be strictly related to similar action by the rival groups, and US economic and other assistance would be directed solely toward bolstering a neutral and independent Laos.

In replying to the Secretary's statements, Thanat denied that Sarit was supporting Phoumi's opposition to a Lao coalition. Although the Thai Government disagreed with the American evaluation of Souvanna, it nevertheless would go along with US policy. Thailand, however, hoped that the US would not become so committed to Souvanna that nothing could be salvaged if the situation did not evolve as planned. Thanat said that until his own recent conversation with Harriman (see item 3 March 1962) the Thai Government had been unaware of the intensity of US feeling regarding Phoumi. Upon learning of the US attitude, the Thai Foreign Minister had advised Sarit to invite Harriman to Bangkok for a joint meeting with Phoumi.

Secretary Rusk then observed that prompt reaction to unfriendly acts was necessary if the aggressor was to be deterred. Thanat replied that his nation had reacted promptly to the crisis at Nam Tha. He noted that Soviet pressures on Thailand had subsided since the Thai Government had made it clear that its relations with the USSR would not be expanded while events in Laos threatened Thai security.

The need for greater regional cooperation in Southeast Asia was the last subject touched upon by Secretary Rusk. In response to a question from the Secretary, Thanat stated that, though Ne Win himself favored collaboration between Burma and the other non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia, certain members of his government hesitated to adopt such a policy. If Ne Win remained in office for a long enough time, Burma might join the Association of Southeast Asia. Thailand, Thanat pointed out, entertained hopes that both Burma and Indonesia eventually would join the Association.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1350, 8 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

In Washington, Thanat was handed a letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit. It was not to be made public at present, and future release would depend on the receipt of a suitable reply from Sarit and the progress of events in Laos.

The President advised Sarit that the US shared Thailand's concern for its security as well as its determination to resist Communism. The independence and territorial integrity of Thailand, the President continued, were of the greatest importance to the United States. After alluding to the value of Thanat's visit to Washington, President Kennedy referred to the joint statement to be issued at the close of the current discussions (see item 6 March 1962). He affirmed that the communique fully

reflected his own position and that of the US Government regarding both US-Thai security relationships and US concern for the progress and well-being of Thailand. (For Sarit's reply, see item 13 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1351, 8 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

President Kennedy received Thai Foreign Minister Thanat accompanied by Secretary of State Rusk. The President expressed appreciation for Thanat's efforts and remarked that his visit had worked out well and that the problem of one nation's being able to block a proposed SEATO action had been resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the Thai and US Governments. Thanat agreed with the President's observations.

Thanat also agreed that the contents of President Kennedy's letter to Sarit (see item 5 March 1962) should not be made public pending further developments in Laos. Its immediate release might be interpreted as a US attempt to write off Laos. After Sarit had replied, the two Governments could consult regarding the release of both the President's message and the Thai Premier's response.

President Kennedy then declared that the only acceptable course of action which would prevent the large-scale violation of the Lao cease-fire and save the kingdom from chaos was the formation of a coalition government headed by Souvanna. On the other hand, the least acceptable course would be the resumption of fighting, for, under present circumstances, the Pathet Lao would quickly overwhelm the FAR. The President added that he could not, without "very good reason," commit US troops in a given area. Intervention under SEATO Plan 5, the President continued, would be very hazardous. After noting that both France and Britain supported Souvanna, the President, although denying that he was trying to force Thailand to adopt an "unpleasant course," nevertheless urged that Thailand also support Souvanna "and see how the situation evolved."

Thanat replied that his Government supported Phoumi solely because of the latter's strong stand against Communism. The President, however, repeated that Phoumi could not defeat the Communists if open warfare were resumed. Under such circumstances, he said, "the US and Thailand would find it difficult to intervene alone" in a landlocked region where US sea and air power could not be used to the best advantage.

The President then emphasized that he did not want Phoumi to quit, but to cooperate by participating in the coalition government. He hoped Sarit would so counsel Phoumi. Should Phoumi withdraw from the Lao political scene, he would upset the US plan for a balanced coalition.

Thanat thereupon warned that certain safeguards would be required if Souvanna were made Prime Minister. Foremost among these was the placing "in safe hands" of

the Defense and Interior portfolios. Although President Kennedy agreed that the acceptance of Souvanna involved certain dangers; he declared that the US and Thailand should place their faith in the Prince.

Secretary Rusk then called attention to the article of the Geneva Agreements that called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops. Thanat stated that it would be difficult to rid Laos of covert Viet Minh units. He was not asking the US to commit troops, but the Thai Foreign Minister wished that some solution other than a Souvanna government could be tried, perhaps Phoumi's King-and-councils scheme. The President, however, replied that, since so many of the interested nations had endorsed Souvanna, there was not time to seek similar agreement on an alternative to a coalition headed by the Prince.

The President then summarized his case. The US, he said, respected Phoumi and wanted him to serve in the coalition. Phoumi's cooperation was, in fact, urgently needed, for without him the coalition would become unbalanced and the chances for its success would consequently be reduced. Finally, Sarit could help the US to gain Phoumi's cooperation.

Thanat agreed to report the conversation to Sarit. He also invited the President and Mrs. Kennedy to visit Thailand and expressed the hope that Mrs. Kennedy could go to Bangkok after her visit to India. The President extended his thanks for the invitation but said that the trip to India, already too long, was being curtailed.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1367, 10 Mar 62.

5 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos reported to CINCPAC that in view of the political situation and the withholding of the US cash grant, he had surveyed the morale, attitude, and pay status of FAR units. The survey indicated cordial relations between FAR and US personnel, good to excellent morale in FAR units, and units paid through January, with some paid through 20 February.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 208664, 5 Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Secretary Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman issued a joint statement marking the end of Thanat's visit to Washington, 1-6 March, during which he had conferred with the President as well as the Secretary of State. The situation in Laos had been "reviewed in detail" and full agreement had been reached on the necessity, for the stability of Southeast Asia, of achieving a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos.

In the joint statement Secretary Rusk reaffirmed that the United States regarded the preservation of Thailand's independence and integrity as vital to the national interest of the United States and to world peace. From this followed the firm intention of the United States to aid Thailand in resisting Communist aggression and subversion. The two conferees agreed that SEATO was an effective deterrent to direct Communist aggression, providing the basis for the signatories

collectively to assist Thailand in case of Communist armed attack. The Secretary of State assured Thanat that in the event of such aggression the United States intended to give full effect to its SEATO obligation, in accordance with its constitutional processes, and further, that the United States recognized this Treaty obligation to be individual as well as collective and hence not dependent upon prior agreement of all the SEATO signatories. During review of the mutual efforts of the two governments to increase the capabilities and readiness of the Thai armed forces the two had taken note that the United States intended to accelerate future deliveries to the greatest extent possible.

With regard to indirect aggression, the Thai Foreign Minister gave assurance of the determination of his government to meet the threat by vigorously pursuing measures for the economic and social welfare and the safety of its people. Secretary Rusk stated that the United States regarded its economic and military assistance agreements with Thailand as providing an important basis for US actions to help Thailand meet indirect aggression, and he reviewed the actions being taken to assist South Viet Nam under similar agreements. Taking note of the work of the Joint Thai-United States Committee in Bangkok, the two agreed that the Committee should continue its efforts to assure effective use of Thailand's resources and US aid in promoting the country's development and security.

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, XLVI (26 Mar 62), 498-499.

6 Mar 62

Admiral Felt, Counselor Unger, Minister Martin, and Colonel Croizat called upon Phoumi at the Lao Embassy in Bangkok. At the outset of the meeting, Phoumi seized the initiative by reviewing the military and political situations. He declared that the military plans prepared over the last six months were just short of complete realization. In the Plaine des Jarres, he contended, the Pathet Lao controlled only the main road, and in Sam Neua Province, the "central bastion position" was again in the hands of the FAR. Phoumi, admitting the dependence of his forces upon US aid, claimed that with American assistance the FAR could defeat the Pathet Lao, but not the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh combined.

Turning to political matters, Phoumi stated that he intended soon to discuss his King-and-councils proposal with Souvanna, who, he claimed, was willing to listen to the plan (for a contrary indication, see item 2 March 1962). He also noted that Souvanna had confessed an inability to control the Pathet Lao. Phoumi, according to Admiral Felt, then inquired if the US intended to abandon Laos. The Admiral assured him that the US had no such plans, and Unger emphasized the US desire for a free, independent, and neutral Laos. President Kennedy, Admiral Felt observed, was aware of Phoumi's abilities and qualities of leadership and believed that Phoumi could play a major role in a coalition government.

Speaking from notes, Admiral Felt delivered the President's warning that, in the event of renewed



hostilities, the US would not support the RLG. Although the message "obviously contained some bitter medicine," both Phoumi and the Lao Ambassador, who also was present, remained impassive throughout the Admiral's presentation.

When Felt had finished, Phoumi denied that he could justly be charged with unwillingness to cooperate. He reviewed the entire history of the Laotian discussions, asserting that it proved he had always been willing, even eager, to negotiate with Souvanna. Phoumi then pointed out that he was now willing to accept Souvanna as a president of one of the six councils that would be formed under the proposed King-and-councils government. He believed, nevertheless, that Souvanna had never proved himself to be truly neutral, and it was in this regard that Phoumi's views differed from those of the US Government. If Phoumi ever felt assured that Souvanna was both neutral and capable of forming a government, he would "recommend" the Prince.

Phoumi then returned to his King-and-councils proposal, claiming that King Savang approved it. As a constitutional monarch, the King himself could not advocate any such formula, so Phoumi was acting as his spokesman.

Admiral Felt then asked why the RLG had failed to win Kong Le away from Souvanna. Phoumi replied that Kong Le assumed that Souvanna would form a predominately Communist government and saw no point in defecting to the faction that probably would be the weakest element in the coalition.

In conclusion, Admiral Felt called upon Phoumi to provide evidence that he was willing to cooperate with the US. Such evidence, the Admiral continued, would be necessary if Phoumi was to retain any support by the US public. Phoumi replied that US military assistance was vital to the continued operation of the FAR and expressed the hope that this conversation would have beneficial results in that regard.

Both Unger and Admiral Felt believed that delivery of the President's message had not altered Phoumi's thinking. Unger cited further evidence of this in remarks made by Phoumi later in the day. In response to questions by reporters concerning progress toward a coalition, Phoumi repeated his demand for control over Defense and Interior, alleging in the process that Souvanna had not proved himself neutral and therefore could not be trusted with the two vital portfolios. Although Ambassador Brown had urged that the Phoumi-Felt meeting be kept secret, Phoumi spoke of it to the press. He told reporters that the meeting would result in a better understanding between the Lao and US Governments, leaving the possible impression that his continued insistence on control of the Defense and Interior posts had US approval.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1348, 7 Mar 62;  
CINCPAC to JCS 080834Z Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Mr. Gordon Jorgensen and Mr. John Hasey, representatives of the US Embassy at Vientiane, called upon Phoumi at the Lao Embassy in Bangkok. The Americans, among other things, offered Phoumi the inducement of financial support if he would enter a Souvanna government, outlined US policy toward Laos, and listened to Phoumi's views on the current situation. The visit by Jorgensen and Hasey followed by less than an hour the interview in which Admiral Felt had delivered a message to Phoumi from President Kennedy stating that the US no longer would support Phoumi if hostilities were resumed (see previous item). The only immediate result of the Jorgensen-Hasey visit was a suggestion by Phoumi that he might retire to Thailand rather than serve under Souvanna.

Jorgensen and Hasey first told Phoumi of a report that Souvanna and Souphanouvong had rejected his King-and-six-councils scheme. Because of this rejection, the only solution appeared to be a coalition headed by Souvanna. The US, the two Americans continued, wanted Phoumi to serve in such a government, even though he could not hold either the Defense or Interior portfolio. While aware that Phoumi would be hampered because of Souvanna's control over finances, the US nevertheless believed that Phoumi, in a post such as Minister of Information with authority over Youth and Sports, could perform useful services. In fact, the US was prepared under such circumstances to give financial support to his anti-Communist undertakings (see items 5 January and 7 March 1962).

Before Phoumi made his decision, the Americans continued, he should have a clear understanding of US policy. Jorgensen then gave Phoumi a message, similar in content to that already delivered by Admiral Felt, which stated that President Kennedy had so defined US policy that intervention on behalf of the RLG was out of the question. According to the Presidential message, the US Government not only would abandon Phoumi if he either refused to join a coalition or caused negotiations toward one to fail; it also would refuse to assist him if the other side attacked, whether as a result of Soviet inability to restrain the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh or because of Communist impatience at the slow progress of negotiations.

Following Jorgensen's exposition, Hasey, "as a friend," elaborated upon the message. The US, Hasey pointed out, considered Phoumi largely responsible for Souvanna's failure to form a coalition. The US also believed the "untenable and dangerous situation in Laos" was due in large measure to Phoumi's actions. Thus, Phoumi's conduct, along with the conviction that a Souvanna coalition was the only solution, had caused the US to refuse to support the FAR if hostilities broke out. If Phoumi should, as the US desired, head the anti-Communist elements within the coalition, he would receive US funds to support his activities.

Phoumi responded by stating that the US had erred in backing Souvanna and in placing its trust in him.



Souvanna was not the strong man and leader that the US believed him to be. Rather, Souvanna was no more than the front man for Souphanouvong and the Pathet Lao, just as Boun Oum was Phoumi's own front man. According to Phoumi, Sarit had recently agreed to try to persuade the US of its error in supporting Souvanna.

Turning to the question of cabinet posts, Phoumi said he would not serve in a Souvanna-led coalition unless he received the Defense portfolio, thus insuring that he retained some measure of military power. When the visitors suggested that logically the command structure of the FAR would remain intact until integration had taken place, Phoumi dismissed this as "American logic, not Lao." Phoumi pointed out that once Souvanna became Premier and Minister of Defense he could change FAR commanders at will. Further, Phoumi did not consider Finance or Information to be satisfactory substitutes for the Defense post.

During the conversation, Phoumi defended his King-and-councils scheme, assuring the Americans that he could, in time, convince Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept it. When told that time was too short for this undertaking, Phoumi replied that patience was a virtue that should be practiced.

Phoumi also insisted that the FAR was now stronger than the enemy forces and that, with just a little more backing, he could win. The US, by withholding support, was playing into the hands of the Communists. Hasey and Jorgensen, however, told Phoumi that the US did not share his high opinion of the FAR and that, because of the weakness of the Lao Army, a prompt settlement was necessary.

In response to repeated urging to rally the foes of Communism by accepting a cabinet post in a Souvanna government, Phoumi declared that his RLG colleagues and the King himself would "laugh at him and accuse him of being a slave of the Americans" if he advocated working with Souvanna. To a final reminder of the US offer of private financial support, Phoumi said that perhaps his visitors should "try this on someone else." "I don't think I can go along with a Souvanna Phouma government and I may retire to Thailand."

[REDACTED]

6 Mar 62

Ambassador Brown advised the Secretary of State that the British, and to some extent the French, did not share the US view that Souvanna's proposals (see item 5 March 1962) were not acceptable. Since he considered it absolutely essential that the Western Allies present a united front to Souvanna and Souphanouvong, Ambassador Brown recommended the following:

1. The US Ambassador at Vientiane would ask the UK Ambassador to inform Souvanna that his proposals required further consultation and that the Allied Ambassadors would contact him as soon as possible.

2. The Western Ambassadors would seek common ground upon which to base their objections to Souvanna's plan and attempt to agree on counterproposals. The US Government, the Ambassador continued, should immediately begin similar discussions with the Governments of France and Britain.

3. When the US had obtained agreement from Britain and France, Ambassador Addis would return to Khang Khay with a Western response to Souvanna's proposal.

4. Meanwhile, the Ambassadors would continue urging Phoumi to enter into the negotiations.

Secretary of State Rusk concurred in Ambassador Brown's recommendations but suggested that, if the Western Ambassadors had difficulty in reaching agreement, the British Ambassador should return shortly to Khang Khay with at least the US reaction and counter-proposals. In the meantime, the Department of State would discuss Souvanna's list with British and French diplomats in Washington.

Later in the day, the Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the British Foreign Office had agreed that Souphanouvong would be unacceptable as Minister of Information and had indicated that the neutral center needed strengthening. French comments had not yet been received.

(See item 7 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1251, 6 Mar 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 786, 6 Mar 62; (C) Msg, SecState  
to Vientiane, 791, 6 Mar 62.

6 Mar 62

Approval was granted for the arming of 12 100-man  
Kha ADC units (see items 25 January and 2 March 1962).  
US stocks in Thailand would be drawn upon for necessary  
equipment; [REDACTED]

7 Mar 62

In conversations with Mr. Hasey of the Vientiane Embassy staff, Boun Oum agreed to help persuade Phoumi to enter a Souvanna-led coalition. While waiting at the Vientiane airport for the plane bringing Phoumi from Bangkok, Hasey privately informed the Prince that the Embassy had received word that Souvanna and Souphanouvong had rejected Phoumi's King-and-councils plan (see item 17 February 1962). As a result, Hasey continued, the only possible solution appeared to be a coalition headed by Souvanna, in which the Ministries of Defense and Interior were controlled by the center group. The US, moreover,

had urged Phoumi to enter such a government in order to rally anti-Communist elements and to protect his supporters.

Both world opinion and US policy, Hasey pointed out, called for prompt agreement on a peaceful solution. Boun Oum, by helping Phoumi to win cabinet approval for a compromise with Souvanna, could play a key role in speedily resolving the crisis. Because of Boun Oum's importance in this regard, the US, in addition to continuing to support the Prince in his present work of spreading an anti-Communist influence throughout Laos, was "prepared to help him out personally, financially, in order that he might continue his work even though he was outside the government" (see items 5 January and 6 March 1962).

After listening to Hasey's remarks, Boun Oum agreed to a second private meeting later in the day. During this afternoon conversation at the Prince's residence, Hasey reviewed his earlier arguments that Phoumi should be persuaded to become an anti-Communist influence within a Souvanna government. When Boun Oum remarked that Souvanna was weak and easily influenced, Hasey responded that, for exactly this reason, Phoumi and Leuam Insisengmay should serve in the cabinet.

Finally, Boun Oum stated that, as a result of the morning's conversation, he realized that a solution would have to be found in the shortest possible time. The military, however, would object to a Souvanna coalition, since they were genuinely fearful of their safety as well as their positions under a new regime. Hasey observed that the only alternative to a coalition was the resumption of hostilities against a superior enemy. As to the fears of the generals, Boun Oum was told that "logically" the FAR command structure would remain intact until after integration, although "this had to be made clear to Souvanna." After receiving Hasey's personal opinion that a coalition was the only possible solution, Boun Oum expressed appreciation for the offer of personal aid and declared that he would cooperate in persuading Phoumi to join a Souvanna government.

7 Mar 62

The US, UK, French, and Canadian working group met in Geneva to discuss the outline of the Lao cease-fire proclamation recently formulated by the Western Embassies in Vientiane (see item 2 March 1962). Although the US delegate announced that the Department of State had approved the draft, including the supporting reasons for its being divided into three proclamations to be issued successively, the "consensus of the meeting was generally unfavorable." Opposition stemmed from the belief that it was "difficult enough to sell Souvanna one proclamation, let alone three." The group also noted that the important detailed plan for the regrouping, integration, and demobilization of forces was reserved for the third proclamation and that the Geneva Conference would have no opportunity to take formal notice of either the second or third proclamation, since it was probable that only the first one would have been issued at the time of the final Conference plenary session. It was also felt that the link that was to connect the cease-fire proclamation

to the Conference protocol was not "meaningful"; the Canadians in particular felt that the ICC's role was insufficiently safeguarded thereby.

The UK delegation, which had called the meeting, stated that it would inform the Foreign Office of the views expressed and would recommend that further discussions on the matter be either postponed or continued in the respective capitals.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 789, 6 Mar 62; Geneva to SecState, CONF 1130, 8 Mar 62.

7 Mar 62

The Western Ambassadors met at Vientiane to seek a formula that would serve as a counterproposal to the cabinet slate recently offered by Souvanna and Souphanouvong (see item 5 March 1962). The Ambassadors agreed, subject to the approval of their Governments, upon a cabinet that would be composed approximately as follows:

1. Pro-West. Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Action, Youth, and Sports; Leuam Insisengmay, Minister of Finance.

2. Xieng Khouang neutrals. Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior; Pheng Phongsavan, Minister of Information; Khamsouk Keola, Minister of Health; Sisamoung Sisaleuamsak, Minister of Posts, Telephone, and Telegraph; Quinim Pholsena, Minister of Social Welfare and Labor.

3. Vientiane neutrals. Nhouy Abhay, Minister of Education; Ngon Sananikone, Minister of Public Works; Oudom Souvannavong, Minister of Cults and Justice.

4. Pathet Lao. Souphanouvong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Phoumi Vongvichit, Minister for Economy and Planning.

The posts of Secretaries of State for the various Ministries would be distributed in a manner appropriate to the political allegiance of the Ministers.

This agreed formula differed slightly from Ambassador Brown's initial proposal in that he had suggested Phoumi as Minister of Information with additional duties regarding youth and sports. In seeking to list the strongest possible Vientiane neutrals for cabinet posts, the Ambassadors were hopeful that Ngon Sananikone could be included, but they felt that appointment of Phoumi Sananikone was "not a real possibility." Anticipating objection in some Western capitals to Souphanouvong as Minister of Foreign Affairs and recalling his earlier claim to the Information post, the Ambassadors discussed which of the two--Foreign Affairs or Information--would be less dangerous in the hands of the Pathet Lao. No conclusion was reached, but an exchange within the agreed listing, making Souphanouvong Minister of Information and Pheng Phongsavan Minister of Foreign Affairs, was proposed as a possible alternative.

Once the proposed cabinet slate was approved in Paris, London, and Washington, UK Ambassador Addis would present it to Souvanna. During this visit to Souvanna, Addis, the US Ambassador believed, might enlist the aid of Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was expected to be in Khang Khay at the time.

The Secretary of State, in response to Ambassador Brown's report of the Vientiane meeting, informed him that he accepted the Ambassador's judgment that the slate agreed upon by the Western diplomats represented the best government that the US could hope to obtain under existing circumstances. Secretary Rusk added, however, that he would be most reluctant to have Souphanouvong made Minister of Information unless such an appointment would result in strengthening the neutral center, for example, by the addition to the cabinet of Phoui Sananikone.

(See items 7-9, and 10 March 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1257, 7 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 793, 7 Mar 62.

7-9  
Mar 62

Officers of the Department of State on 7 March informed Australian, British and French diplomatic representatives at Washington of Secretary Rusk's approval of the proposed cabinet slate agreed upon by the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane (see item 7 March 1962). The representatives were asked to recommend that their Governments not only accept the agreed slate but also give their Ambassadors in Vientiane great latitude in supporting Ambassador Brown. When the French diplomat expressed doubt that his Government would agree to placing Souphanouvong in charge of Lao foreign affairs, the State Department spokesman argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be less dangerous in Pathet Lao hands than Education, Finance, or Information. This post would afford Souphanouvong little influence on internal Lao affairs, including the elections; moreover, Lao foreign policy would largely be established ahead of time by the Geneva accords under which the new government would be set up.

On 8 March, the State Department received word that the British Government concurred in the presentation to Souvanna of the agreed slate and had instructed Ambassador Addis to support the US Ambassador in Vientiane. The Australian Government reacted in similar fashion.

Although still without instructions from Paris regarding presentation of the Western proposal to Souvanna, Ambassador Falaize stated in Vientiane on 9 March that he was prepared, on his own responsibility, to approve a visit by Addis to Khang Khay. The British Ambassador thereupon informed Souvanna that he would like to make the trip on the following day, 10 March.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 794, 7 Mar 62; 796, 8 Mar 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1261, 1262, 9 Mar 62.

8 Mar 62

In connection with the Laos Country Team efforts to begin a civic action program among the Kha in the Bolovens

Plateau (see item 23 February 1962), CHMAAG Laos requested of CINCPAC that one 3-man Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT) be assigned to MAAG Laos for at least six months (see item 18 April 1962). CHMAAG reported that, because of Kha suspicions of the Lao, it was not advisable to use FAR personnel in Kha areas. Friendly relations between Lao and Kha should be established gradually by US personnel; that is the CAMTT.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 209259, 8 Mar 62.

8, 9  
Mar 62

With 105-mm. howitzers brought from Luang Prabang, FAR forces fired on enemy positions east of Nam Tha on 8 March. The next day the enemy retaliated by shelling FAR positions about two miles east of the town with six rounds, estimated as 82-mm. This was the first enemy ground activity since 28 February. The FAR howitzers replied with 72 rounds.

No patrol activities or engagements were reported, and the air field was reopened to normal traffic.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 209418, 071310Z Mar 62; DA IN 209255, 081320Z Mar 62; DA IN 210168, 101200Z Mar 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP 10-62, 8 Mar 62.

8, 9  
Mar 62

During a conversation in Paris between Manac'h, the Director of Asian Affairs in the French Foreign Office, and a US Embassy official, the former expressed French concern over the suggestion that Souphanouvong become Foreign Minister in a coalition government (see item 7 March 1962). While Manac'h recognized that Souphanouvong might use the Information Ministry to develop an organization which could influence the elections, he felt that the control of Laos relations with the United Nations, Communist China, and the Soviet Union that Souphanouvong would gain as Foreign Minister would pose serious long-term problems.

In regard to the cabinet list recently proposed by Souvanna, a list which the United States had found unacceptable (see item 5 March 1962), Manac'h adopted a hands-off attitude, stating that the Foreign Office "prefers to deal in general principles rather than in specific individuals." He did, however, intend to recommend that Ambassador Falaize be given wide latitude on this question. The French felt that any sort of mutually acceptable agreement was more desirable than protracted bargaining and the concomitant postponement of a solution.

This view was re-emphasized on the following day, in a message (revealed confidentially to a US official) of instruction to Falaize from Couve de Murville. While noting that Souphanouvong would probably have to receive one out of the three "political" Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Information, or Education, Couve opposed granting him Foreign Affairs and suggested Information as the least dangerous alternative. Falaize was granted considerable

discretion in developing an acceptable formula concerning the other, presumably less vital, portfolios. Nothing was said regarding the US concern about the unimpressive caliber of the "non-Xieng Khouang neutrals," or the US anxiety about the dangers of having the Pathet Lao acquire any of the ministries exercising an important direct influence on the Lao people (see item 5 March 1962).

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4199, 8 Mar 62; 4217, 9 Mar 62.

9 Mar 62

The Southeast Asia Study Group reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff its conclusions regarding the questions raised by the Chief of Naval Operations in his memorandum of 5 February (see item). The Study Group noted that US policy in Laos was directed primarily at the development of that country, whereas Communist policy appeared to transcend national boundaries. The situation called for the application of US policy on an area basis, with provision for shifts of emphasis as opportunities for exploiting specific situations arose. Goals for each country in the area should be defined, and all political, economic, and military actions should be coordinated in a single effort towards achieving the over-all objective of a free Southeast Asia.

The Study Group concluded that US policy would be better directed if the objective in Laos was defined as recommended in the JSSC memorandum of 24 February (see item); that is, not merely a free and neutral Laos, but "a free and neutral Laos that denies to the communists a base or avenue for infiltration into South Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia."

On the matter of the necessity for planning alternative courses of military action for adoption if political means of reaching a Lao settlement failed, the Study Group went somewhat beyond the JSSC recommendation of 24 February. The planning should be undertaken, but if it became necessary for the United States or SEATO to act, the objective should be not merely to secure the Laotian approaches to neighboring countries but "to consolidate Laos under friendly control." This was the most feasible course of action for controlling the access routes, short of US action in North Viet Nam.

The Study Group was impressed by the relationship between their own replies to the CNO's questions and the JCS reassessment of US policy submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 5 January (see item). They recommended that the JCS reaffirm the views contained in that earlier memorandum and ascertain its current status.

The Study Group's answers to the CNO's questions included the following points. The United States should support a Souvanna government as long as it remained "truly neutral," despite the prospect that such a government would not have the means, and perhaps the will, to halt the Viet Cong infiltration into South Viet Nam. Short of eliminating the source of Viet Cong operations in North Viet Nam, the United States could only counter by increasing the tempo and extent of its existing actions



in South Viet Nam. If Communist pressure was directed through "neutral" Laos against Thailand, Burma, or Cambodia, the United States should increase its support to these countries and with regard to Thailand should assist "by all possible measures including a coordinated and full scale counterinsurgency program and, if necessary, the introduction of United States armed forces."

If indications developed that the Souvanna government was tending to align itself with the Communist Bloc, "the ultimate recourse would be to combine political and military action, including the movement of significant United States forces to mainland Southeast Asia. Such action would indicate United States willingness to enforce the provisions which established the neutral government." If alignment of the Souvanna government with the Communist Bloc became unmistakable and Phoumi or some other influential person broke away to form a separate government or army, the United States would have two choices. It could support "any United Nations or Geneva type action" for a negotiated settlement, accepting that this course might ultimately result in Communist domination of Laos. Or the United States could choose to support the anti-Communist faction in Laos, with as much assistance from allies as could be mustered. In the opinion of the Study Group, this should be "all-out support, to include the introduction of United States/SEATO combat troops with maximum air and logistic support. The objective would be the consolidation of all Laos." But if Phoumi contemplated such a break while the Souvanna government continued to maintain its "truly neutral" status, the United States must severely discourage him and remain faithful to its commitment to support the existing government.

The Study Group considered that SEATO provided the best basis for Free World unity and response against Communism in the area, but it had so far been unable to cope with Communist insurgency. "SEATO must be recast into an organization of action." The Study Group suggested a number of measures for strengthening SEATO militarily.

(On 20 March the JCS noted the report submitted by the Southeast Asia Study Group.)

(TS) JCS 2344/38, 9 Mar 62, and (TS) Dec On JCS 2344/38, 20 Mar 62; JMF 9155.2/3100 (2 Feb 62).

10 Mar 62 From the US Embassy in Bangkok, Counselor Unger reported the Thai reaction to the Rusk-Thanat communique (see item 6 March 1962), which had climaxed Thanat's visit to Washington. He also assessed the impact of Admiral Felt's visit to Bangkok (see items 5 and 6 March 1962).

Speaking of the joint communique, Prime Minister Sarit had declared that his government had for a long time sought this type of assurance. The Thai Defense Minister observed that, because of the confusion within SEATO, Thailand could not afford to await action by that organization if aggression should actually take place. SEATO Secretary General Pote, although he announced that the communique was merely a public declaration of previous US policy, informed Unger in a private conversation that the communique did tend to "downgrade SEATO."

According to Unger, the conversations in Washington and the resultant communique had allayed to a great



extent Thai fears that the need for unanimity would prevent SEATO from taking effective action in the event of Communist aggression against Thailand. The Thai press displayed "pleasure and relief" at the assurance of US aid. Unfortunately, these same press reports tended to imply that, as a result of the communique, SEATO was no longer important to Thailand's security. The Thai public was also heartened by Thanat's meeting with the President (see item 5 March 1962). Press reports underscored a statement by President Kennedy that the meeting had been most fruitful.

Admiral Felt, during his visit to Bangkok, had emphasized to Sarit the importance of SEATO, sought Sarit's help in dealing with Phoumi, and called upon Phoumi to show evidence of his willingness to cooperate with the US. The Admiral had also outlined US policy for SEATO Secretary General Pote.

In evaluating Sarit's reaction, Unger noted that the Prime Minister's customary expressions of distrust regarding Souvanna had been less forceful than usual. Phoumi, Unger continued, had given news of Felt's visit to the press, even though the meeting was to have been kept secret. Subsequent newspaper reports, based on statements by Phoumi, suggested that Phoumi had clarified the situation for Admiral Felt. The SEATO Secretary General had responded to the Admiral's presentation by calling attention to Phoumi's need of assurance that the US would not withdraw so fully from Laos as to be unable to aid him in resisting if the Communists attempted to overrun the country.

In general, Unger believed that Admiral Felt's visit had been helpful because it showed that US officials were "speaking with one voice regarding Laos" and gave further evidence of US concern for the security of Thailand.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1367, 10 Mar 62.

10 Mar 62 British Ambassador Addis met with Souphanouvong and Souvanna at Khang Khay. According to Addis, the mood of this exploratory meeting was "'not discouraging.'"

The discussion opened with a review by Ambassador Addis of US efforts toward a peaceful settlement. The Ambassador then stated that it was not yet possible to give a "definite reply" regarding Souvanna's most recent list (see item 5 March 1962), since consultations among the Allies were continuing.

Turning to the distribution of key posts, Ambassador Addis suggested giving Foreign Affairs and the lesser portfolio of Economy to the Pathet Lao, while retaining for Phoumi's faction the Ministries of Information and Finance. Souphanouvong, however, rejected this proposal. The Prince insisted that, though the lesser posts of Information, Education, Finance, and Economy and Planning might be divided between the

rightists and his own faction, it was essential for the key Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs to remain in the hands of the center group. Addis replied that the division suggested by Souphanouvong had not been mentioned during the Geneva meeting of the three Princes and that, at any rate, it would be better to balance Foreign Affairs against Information. Addis described Souphanouvong's attitude toward this suggestion as "distinctly cool."

Souvanna then "remarked sharply" that, if no agreement could be reached, he would return to Paris. To hasten agreement, he suggested that Sports and Youth, which had been attached to Information in the hope of attracting Phoumi, should, for the same purpose, be shifted to some other Ministry such as Social Action. Souphanouvong was reported to have shown a "flicker of genuine interest" in this plan.

Ambassador Addis then turned to the second question of substance, the composition of the center group. In response to a suggestion by Addis that a member of the Sananikone family be included in the cabinet, Souphanouvong declared that either Ngon or Phoui would have to be considered rightists rather than members of the neutral center. Addis's recommendation that Nhouay be Minister of Education evoked silence but not hostility. The mention of Leuam Rajasombath and Khamking Souvanlasy brought no response from either Prince.

Souvanna then closed the meeting with the statement that he and his colleagues would need two or three days in which to consider the views expressed by Ambassador Addis. If Souphanouvong and the Western Powers could not agree within ten days, Souvanna intended to return to Paris.

According to Ambassador Addis, Phoumi Vongvichit had claimed during the meeting that the US was not really exerting pressure on Phoumi. Significantly, it was Souvanna who answered the charge by expressing confidence in Harriman and by stressing the need to provide a cabinet slate that the US could use in its efforts to persuade Phoumi.

In commenting upon the meeting, the Western Ambassadors agreed that it appeared possible that the key cabinet posts might be allocated along the following lines: Defense and Interior to Souvanna; Information to Souphanouvong; Social Action, Youth and Sports to Phoumi; Education and Foreign Affairs to the center; Finance to a rightist; and Economy and Planning to a member of the Pathet Lao. The Ambassadors also agreed that the outlook for improving the balance within the center between Vientiane and Xieng Khouang neutrals appeared obscure.

(See item 16 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1271, 10 Mar 62.

10 Mar 62     The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane informed the Secretary of State of certain economic and financial

measures that the RLG was planning to take in order to counteract the effect of the suspension of US financial assistance (see item 26 January 1962). These austerity measures, the Counselor continued, could not, in themselves, stave off economic and financial chaos for more than six months.

The basic financial measure was the monthly borrowing of 300 million kip from the Lao National Bank. Existing laws limiting the total amount thus borrowed would be either repealed or ignored. The inflationary impact of these loans was to be offset by reductions in government spending, increased taxes, controls on the salaries of government officials, and compulsory loans from merchants. The strength of the FAR also would be reduced in an effort to lessen government expenditures. Finally, the RLG would begin buying essential foodstuffs in an attempt to hold down prices, would gradually impose price controls, and might establish a system of food cooperatives for its employees.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1269, 10 Mar 62.

11 Mar 62 Both King Savang and Assembly President Somsanith criticized the US in speeches made at the closing session of the National Assembly. The King stated that the Lao people themselves could easily resolve the existing crisis, if domestic quarrels were not "stirred up by foreigners under various guises and even by certain of them who claim to be our friends." Next, the King complained that the US had suspended its aid, even though the RLG had kept faith concerning the terms of this assistance. Finally, the King expressed his confidence in the Boun Oum government and called upon the nation to unite behind it in its task of resolving the present crisis.

Somsanith, in his address, characterized the kingdom's plight as a "quarrel of foreigners in the way of whom Laotians have placed themselves." He criticized Souvanna and the NLHX for inviting Sino-Soviet interference and the US for using financial and economic pressure against the RLG. The RLG, Somsanith warned, might sever relations with those "friendly countries" that distrusted the Boun Oum government and refused to help it eliminate foreign interference.

(See item 16 March 1962.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1275, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62 In a message that asked for comment or concurrence from the several Service headquarters in Washington, CINCPAC outlined a plan for the disposition of the US military personnel who would be affected by a withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos. Mobile Training Teams, Special Forces personnel, and others who were on temporary duty status would be returned to their parent commands. The permanently assigned military personnel of MAAG Laos would be dealt with under the following scheme: 1) CHMAAG Laos would obtain from the Service Departments the individual personnel data required for reassignment

action and would maintain rosters, updated at 15-day intervals until such time as the Lao situation was stabilized. 2) If time permitted, personnel would be reassigned by their own Service to new duty stations; otherwise, they would be attached to JUSMAG Thailand pending reassignment instructions. 3) Upon a decision to withdraw US military personnel from MAAG Laos, representatives of MAAG Laos, CHJUSMAG Thailand, CHMAAG Vietnam, and COMUSMACV would meet in Bangkok at the call of CHMAAG Laos; these representatives, using certain criteria listed by CINCPAC, would recommend some personnel for return to CONUS and others for utilization by JUSMAG Thailand, MAAG Vietnam, or USMACV, as well as some for retention by MAAG Laos or a successor unit with a newly defined mission.

(By 20 March all the Services had concurred in the above plan.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to HQUSAF, et al., 122042Z Mar 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 290935Z Mar 62.

12 Mar 62 In accordance with a request from the Department of State, Ambassador Gavin in Paris approached Foreign Minister Couve de Murville with the suggestion that the French Ambassador in Laos, Falaize, be permitted "considerable latitude" in the current discussions on formation of a Lao cabinet. Specifically, Gavin inquired whether Couve de Murville would be prepared to accept Souphanouvong as Foreign Minister, should Falaize suggest this. The reply was non-committal, but Gavin did feel that US persuasion plus strong recommendations from Falaize might lead the French to accept this proposal. Their opposition, Gavin continued, appeared to be based on the previous Allied appraisal of the Foreign Ministry as a post of prime importance.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4257, 12 Mar 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 4856, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos reported that three MAP T-6 aircraft had been damaged beyond economical repair since 23 February, leaving only five available for close support operations. He requested that three replacement aircraft be provided as soon as possible, advising CINCPAC that Phoumi and the RLG air commander considered this requirement imperative to maintain the combat effectiveness of the FAR against the enemy's increasing armored vehicle capability.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 120550Z Mar 62.

13 Mar 62 Thailand's Acting Foreign Minister requested the presence of Counselor Unger and handed him the text of Prime Minister Sarit's reply, dated 12 March, to President Kennedy's letter (see item 5 March 1962). Unger was assured that the reply represented a full endorsement of the recent US-Thai communique (see item 6 March 1962).

In his letter to the President, Sarit expressed his own appreciation for the President's message, the kind reception given Thanat, and the issuance of a joint communique that showed such concern for Thailand's progress as well as its security. The Prime Minister then conveyed the "heart-felt gratitude" of the Assembly, the

Government, and the Thai people for the assurance that the US would, in accordance with its constitutional processes, fulfill its SEATO obligations toward Thailand without waiting for unanimous agreement among the members of that organization. A similar feeling of gratitude had been aroused by the re-affirmation of US commitments to meet indirect aggression on the basis of the SEATO pact and in accordance with bilateral economic and military assistance agreements. Thailand, the Prime Minister continued, also welcomed the US intention to continue working closely with the Thai Government toward the economic and social advancement of the nation.

The communique, Sarit declared, represented a "significant milestone" in relations between the two nations. He then promised that Thailand would devote its energies to orderly development and progress as well as to the preservation of its heritage of freedom.

Unger and the Acting Foreign Minister discussed whether the exchange of letters should, as the US desired, be withheld from the public pending further developments in Laos. Release of the two messages, Unger pointed out, could be interpreted as a sign that the US had abandoned Laos. For that reason he urged that no public mention be made of the letters. When informed that Sarit had let slip to newsmen that he had cabled a letter to the President and that Sarit might be questioned by the Thai Assembly regarding this message, Unger recommended that the "less said the better." Thai officials assured him that Sarit's mention of the cable had been accidental.

After discussing the handling of the letters, Unger warned that "some progress on the Laos situation" was imperative. He expressed hope that Thanat had disclosed to Sarit the full extent of US concern over Laos. Unger then requested that, if there had been some "gap in communication," Sarit be fully informed before Unger's scheduled interview with the Premier later in the day (see item 13 March 1962).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1385, 13 Mar 62; (LOU) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1388, 13 Mar 62.

13 Mar 62      Counselor Unger, at his own request, called upon Prime Minister Sarit in order to reveal the Rusk-Thanat communique (see item 6 March 1962), especially that portion in which the US and Thailand had expressed agreement on the necessity for the establishment of a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos. The Prime Minister's reply to President Kennedy (see items 5 and 13 March 1962), Unger observed, had contained no mention of Thai agreement with the US on this basic objective of US policy toward Laos.

As a result of this omission, Unger now asked if he could inform the US Government that Sarit endorsed not only this part of the communique but also the various aspects of US policy that had been explained to Thanat during the latter's visit to Washington (see items 2, 3, and 5 March 1962). The Prime Minister replied in the affirmative and added that he was in "full sympathy" and agreed "in principle" with the US position. Unger

considered this a clear endorsement not only of the statement contained in the communique but also of the US position as outlined more fully to Thanat.

After obtaining this assurance from Sarit (see item 16 March 1962 for a further statement of Thai policy), Unger called the Prime Minister's attention to Thanat's proposal that Harriman come to Bangkok for meetings with Sarit and Phoumi. Unger said that Harriman was willing to make the journey, provided that the visit seemed worth while. The Counselor then asked for Sarit's comments on the American concept of a worth-while meeting. Unger explained that Harriman would first outline the Lao situation for Sarit so that the two could agree on common action to convince Phoumi that he should enter into sincere negotiations. Next, Harriman and Sarit would meet with Phoumi and press him to confer with Souvanna regarding a coalition government. When Unger suggested that Harriman might arrive on 20 March, Sarit promptly agreed.

To avoid any misunderstanding on Sarit's part, Unger emphasized that the Prime Minister would be expected to join Harriman in exerting "real pressure" on Phoumi. Sarit warned that Phoumi might spurn his advice or stand firm against the Prime Minister's urging. Unger's remarks also elicited from Sarit some extended comments on the political situation in Laos, the King-and-councils formula, and the possible membership of a coalition cabinet.

That feature of the political scene upon which Sarit dwelt was the possibility of a split between Souphanouvong and Souvanna. In such circumstances, the Prime Minister advocated Phoumi's joining forces with Souvanna to eliminate the Pathet Lao. Unger, however, replied that, since the US was supporting the unification of Laos under a coalition in which all three factions were represented, American officials looked upon the possible split as an opportunity for Phoumi and Souvanna to build a political force capable of counter-balancing the Communists. The resumption of hostilities, Unger warned, would lead to a complete disaster for the Free World.

When Sarit turned to the King-and-councils plan, Unger noted the lack of any clear indication that King Savang was willing to take part, despite Phoumi's claim (see item 6 March 1962) that the King advocated this formula. Unger then reminded Sarit that President Kennedy had told Thanat (see item 5 March 1962) that there was not time to construct an alternative to Souvanna. The Thai Prime Minister abandoned the subject.

A discussion of the membership of a coalition cabinet followed, in which Sarit endorsed Phoumi Sananikone for a responsible post and emphasized the importance of finding a key position for Phoumi. The Prime Minister sought to "make sure Phoumi was not required to kneel before Souvanna in surrender." Souvanna, Unger replied, had indicated that he would not consider himself as victor and Phoumi as vanquished if a settlement were reached. Unger added that

Harriman was "most impatient," both because of his conviction that a prompt settlement was necessary and as a result of Phoumi's persistent refusal to face the issues.

Sarit thereupon asked if the US would support Phoumi if he did join a coalition. Unger replied that, since the US believed Phoumi could play an important role in any coalition, it certainly would support him, provided he did not embark on "separate adventures." Sarit then asked, assuming that Defense and Interior both went to Souvanna, if Phoumi might not serve as supreme commander of the Lao armed forces. In reply, Unger suggested that any such arrangement would have to be worked out between Phoumi and Souvanna as part of an agreement to insure the integrity of the FAR.

In commenting upon the interview, Unger reported that Sarit had ended the discussion by remarking that the sooner Harriman arrived the better. The Prime Minister had refrained from his usual sarcasm, and Unger believed that Sarit understood what he was expected to do during Harriman's visit. The Counselor predicted, however, that Harriman probably would have to review many of the points that had just been explained to the Prime Minister. In addition, Harriman might find it necessary to engage in a more specific discussion of the proposed cabinet.

(See items 22, 24, and 25 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1391, 13 Mar 62.

15 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that US AID officials were considering the arrangements necessary in the event that a political settlement was reached under which MAAG Laos was abolished but US military aid to Laos continued. In response to AID Washington's request for an estimate, USOM Laos, with MAAG assistance, had concluded that under such circumstances USOM would require a minimum of 41 qualified civilians to oversee the aid program. In arriving at this figure, USOM had assumed that it would program and control MAP materiel deliveries and defense support funds and audit both MAP and defense support accounts. USOM would not perform any military training activities, except for programming off-shore training courses requested by the FAR.

CHMAAG thought that USOM's planning raised a fundamental issue regarding future US aid to the FAR: would the US continue to provide assistance without being permitted to administer and supervise it properly? Since the Geneva Agreement would preclude the use of US military personnel to perform this control, it appeared to CHMAAG that French or nonmilitary US agencies would be charged with administering a substantial US military aid project. CHMAAG doubted seriously that such an arrangement would be either efficient or effective.

(On 21 March, commenting to OSD(ISA) on CHMAAG's message, CINCPAC recommended that "under no . . . conditions" should French or nonmilitary US agencies be charged with the supervision of US military assistance to Laos. If



MAAG Laos was to be abolished while military assistance continued, CINCPAC believed "something similar to the former PEO [Programs Evaluation Office] structure" should be established so that US military personnel could continue to administer military aid. See item 27 April 1962.)

(C) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 211528, 15 Mar 62; ADMINO CINCPAC to OSD/ISA, 210047Z Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 The Thai Ambassador in Washington informed the Department of State that he had been instructed to deliver, along with Sarit's letter to President Kennedy (see item 13 March 1962), an oral assurance that the Thai Government fully agreed with the US on the need to achieve a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos and also was prepared to cooperate actively in obtaining a peaceful settlement of the Laotian crisis. Sarit, the Ambassador stated, would deliver a similar assurance to Harriman when the latter visited Bangkok.

Acting Secretary of State Ball informed the American Embassy at Bangkok that he would recommend that the President express appreciation for the "warm tone" of Sarit's letter and for the oral assurance given by the Thai Ambassador. He believed, however, that the President should continue to urge that the letters be withheld from publication until the Lao situation became clarified.

Secretary Ball added, for the information of the US Ambassador to Thailand, that this strong oral assurance should satisfy the US and give the Ambassador some leverage with Sarit if the Prime Minister should try to alter his position regarding a Laotian settlement. For the present, the Ambassador no longer need seek a supplemental letter from Sarit. If the Prime Minister, during Harriman's visit, adhered to the spirit of the assurance given to the President, no supplemental letter would be necessary.

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1405, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State of an RLG demarche to the French Foreign Office. A Lao diplomat had inquired regarding French views on King Savang's speech of 11 March (see item) and had requested the French Government to publicly support the King's appeal for all Lao to rally round the Boun Oum government. The French spokesman avoided a direct reply, but he tacitly indicated the French view by expressing his surprise at "this new and unexpected development," which seemed to contradict the many attempts to form a coalition government under the mandate entrusted to Souvanna by the King.

The French felt this demarche to be merely the first of a series of misguided attempts by the Sisouk-Khampan Panya group of RLG politicians to gain French, US, and UK support, and therefore suggested an exchange of views regarding possible joint representations by the three Western Ambassadors to King Savang. The Foreign Office spokesman told a US Embassy official that the French had



been "holding their breath" regarding the King's speech, "hoping it would go away if everyone kept quiet."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4335, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62

Ambassador Addis again journeyed to Khang Khay, where Prince Souvanna informed him that further concessions or adjustments could not be made prior to a meeting of the three Princes. By bargaining now, Souvanna and Souphanouvong would surrender the flexibility of action necessary for successful negotiations with Boun Oum. Thus, Souvanna concluded, it would be useless, pending a meeting of the Princes, to continue discussions with the Western Ambassadors concerning the composition of a coalition government. Souvanna added that he would not invite Phoumi to such a meeting unless he was certain that Phoumi would accept.

In elaborating upon the future bargaining position of the two Princes, Souvanna stressed certain governing principles. After claiming for the center the key portfolios of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, he stated that the posts of Education, Finance, Information, and Planning should be divided between left and right, with each wing receiving one political and one technical ministry; the remaining positions should be divided equally among the wings.

Souphanouvong, in commenting upon Souvanna's statement of principles, assured Ambassador Addis that he claimed no particular post for himself or for his Pathet Lao adherents. In response to a question by Addis, Souphanouvong also indicated that he was ready to be "generous" regarding the composition of the center and willing to provide an attractive post, such as Youth and Sports combined with Social Action, for Phoumi.

During the discussion, Souvanna observed that the King, at the closing session of the National Assembly on 11 March (see item), had made a speech in which he congratulated the RLG for its efforts to solve the Lao problem but neglected to mention Souvanna's mandate to form a government. It seemed to Souvanna that the King had elected to support the Boun Oum government. Ambassador Addis replied by assuring Souvanna that the Western Ambassadors believed Souvanna's mandate remained valid. The King's speech had, after all, been written by the RLG. The British Ambassador then stated that the Western Ambassadors would question the King and, he was certain, would be informed that Souvanna remained responsible for the formation of a coalition government (see item 19 March 1962).

In commenting upon the meeting, Addis remarked that a "noticeable deterioration" had resulted from the King's failure to mention Souvanna. Indeed, the Prince apparently believed that he could do nothing until his mandate had been reaffirmed. Yet, both Souvanna and Souphanouvong believed they were capable of negotiating an agreement with Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1298, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC, for his comments, a proposed plan for the evacuation, upon their release, of US civilian and military personnel (an estimated 7 to 9 persons) currently held prisoner by rebel forces in Laos. The plan would be implemented by the Department of the Army (ACSI) in order to minimize the risk of compromising the cover plan of those prisoners who were in covert status at the time of their capture, and to prevent embarrassment to the US. It was assumed as most likely that the release of US prisoners would coincide with the culmination of negotiations for a coalition government in Laos. The plan provided for close control and prompt evacuation of all released personnel and gave particular attention to the control of press coverage.

(TS) JCS 2344/39, 17 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/1410 (14 Mar 62).

16 Mar 62 CINCPAC advised the JCS of the urgency of obtaining the Thai Government's assent to the holding of SEATO Tactical Air Exercise AIR COBRA, scheduled to begin on 23 April. Since his planning recognized 23 March as the "go or no go" date for the exercise, CINCPAC requested that the Department of State be urged to press for Thai approval in the near future. CINCPAC recalled that his own discussion of the matter with Sarit had been unproductive (see item 5 March 1962) and that there appeared to be some concern within the State Department about the airdrops close to the Lao border that were part of the exercise. On the latter point he observed that few such drops were scheduled and that these could be omitted without detriment to the exercise.

(On 19 March, a memorandum by General Decker, as Acting Chairman, JCS, brought CINCPAC's request to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, but the Department of State took the desired action on that same day, as a direct result of the CINCPAC message of 16 March. Ambassador Young was instructed to pursue the matter of agreement on conducting AIR COBRA with the Thai Government, if Harriman, when he arrived in Bangkok, approved. The State Department saw a necessity for weighing the training benefits and the desirable emphasis AIR COBRA would give to the military side of SEATO against Thai reluctance to participate and the risk that the exercise might appear provocative if it occurred at a delicate stage in the negotiations on Laos. (See items 22 March and 23-28 April 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 162357Z Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1410, 19 Mar 62; (S) JCS 2339/61, 21 Mar 62.

16, 18  
Mar 62

On 16 March, another reinforcement of FAR forces at Nam Tha began with the arrival of leading elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion.

Two days later, on 18 March, the enemy resumed shelling the airfield, for the first time since late February, and continued to fire at frequent intervals over a two-hour period. An Air America C-46 was damaged, and the airfield was closed to operations. The

enemy weapon was estimated to be an 85-mm. gun, with a maximum range of almost twice the 8700 yards of the 120-mm. mortars previously employed in shelling the airfield.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 212514, 18 Mar 62; DA IN 212650, 19 Mar 62.

16-20  
Mar 62

The US delegation received word on 16 March that the RLG delegation had been instructed by its government to leave Geneva. Attempts by Swezey, the acting head of the US delegation, to obtain clarification from RLG representatives were answered evasively, with some talk of the necessity to cut expenses.

Confirmation was received from Co-Chairman MacDonald, who reported on a conversation that day with Sopsaisana of the RLG delegation. The latter had stated that King Savang's speech (see item 11 March 1962) opened a new phase of the Lao problem; he had gone on to imply that the RLG therefore "saw no further point" in maintaining a delegation in Geneva. MacDonald disagreed very strongly, asserting that the Conference members expected the RLG "to live up to its commitments under the Zurich, Ban Hin Heup, and Geneva agreements, and would not understand the RLG going back on its word." MacDonald urged that, "at the very least," one member of the RLG delegation remain to maintain contacts.

In a discussion with Swezey on 17 March, Sopsaisana stated that, in the light of MacDonald's comments, he had advised the RLG to continue its representation at Geneva in abbreviated form. He said, however, that the RLG had not yet replied to his suggestion and implied that the departures of various RLG diplomats must therefore continue, although he hoped these could be "sufficiently fuzzed over to avoid the impression of a rupture." Swezey replied strongly that "nobody would be fooled by this for very long," that such a departure would undoubtedly create a highly unfavorable impression on the other delegations, especially since representation would continue for Souvanna and for the Pathet Lao.

Swezey informed the Department of State on 20 March that Sopsaisana's recommendation to the RLG apparently had taken effect, and that a Lao diplomat of lesser rank was therefore remaining in Geneva.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1136, 17 Mar 62; CONFE 1137, 20 Mar 62.

18 Mar 62

Phoumi informed the Western press that a major attack on Nam Tha had been in progress since the day before. Four Viet Minh, two Chinese, and two or three Pathet Lao battalions were alleged to be participating in the operation. Phoumi also claimed that Russian voices had been heard giving commands over the enemy radio net. If this attack continued for three or four days, the RLG would, according to Phoumi, consider the action a casus belli. (Ambassador Brown's information, from MAAG sources, was that firing on the airstrip had been resumed but that there was no evidence of a large-scale enemy attack.)

Phoumi did not consider the situation he had described as dangerous, however, since the FAR could "take care of" both the Viet Minh and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi doubted that large-scale Chinese Communist intervention in Laos was likely, since vigorous Chinese participation would be a serious matter for "other governments as well as for the RLG." He then stated that the Chinese Communists, having been denied the right to political participation in the Laotian settlement, were playing a military role. Phoumi did not clarify these apparently contradictory remarks about the Chinese role.

After outlining the military situation, Phoumi announced that the RLG would, on the following day, open diplomatic relations with South Korea. He expressed the hope that he could secure aid from the Philippines, Taiwan, and possibly South Korea, as well as from Thailand, whose Premier, Phoumi claimed, had assured him of future assistance.

Phoumi, moreover, did not believe that the US suspension of aid, which he termed a misunderstanding, was a serious matter, since the American policy had been announced orally and in the press rather than in a formal note from the US Government. The object of this US financial pressure was to gain acceptance of Souvanna as Prime Minister of a coalition government. The RLG, however, had not been convinced of the wisdom of a Souvanna government in spite of "very clever" American arguments.

Souvanna, Phoumi continued, had failed to form a coalition. The cabinet proposed by the Prince was not a good one, since the neutrals were "not only mediocre but Red." Thus, the only solution was the King-and-councils plan (see item 9 February 1962). Furthermore, Phoumi thought it very possible that Souphanouvong would not allow Souvanna to return to Paris (see item 10 March 1962), even though negotiations became stalled.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1303, 18 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Phoumi announced to Hasey of the American Embassy that he would not go to Bangkok to confer with Harriman. Instead, he planned to spend two or three days at Savannakhet in order to complete a religious ceremony. The RLG cabinet, Phoumi explained, had decided that he should not make the journey. Since he did not have the permission of his own Government, he could not negotiate with the representative of another state. The King, Phoumi continued, concurred in the cabinet's decision and would so inform Ambassador Brown at the audience scheduled for that afternoon (see item 19 March 1962).

Phoumi then requested that Harriman either come to Vientiane or send an emissary to that city. Hasey warned Phoumi that his refusal was a grave error and urged him to reconsider. When told that it was impossible for Harriman to visit Vientiane and unlikely that he would send an emissary, Phoumi suggested that any message for him from Harriman be transmitted through Ambassador Brown. Although Hasey told Phoumi that this suggestion would be a serious affront, the General merely asked that the US Government be informed of his refusal and said that, if

there were a message for him, he could be reached at Savannakhet.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1307, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State informed the US Ambassadors in Vientiane and Bangkok that "Phoumi's refusal to meet with Harriman, his remarks to press, his demarches to French and British, and withdrawal of RLG delegation to Geneva (see items 19, 18, 16, and 16-20 March 1962, respectively) indicate to us that Phoumi has thrown down the gauntlet." The Secretary instructed Ambassador Young to inform Sarit and General Wallop of Phoumi's abrupt change of attitude, seek the Thai Premier's interpretation of Phoumi's moves, and insist that Sarit make every effort to convince Phoumi to reconsider and meet with Harriman at Bangkok. The Ambassador should point out that Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman would amount to a break with the US. He might also inquire about Phoumi's intimation at the press conference that he had assurances of substantial Thai assistance.

Ambassador Brown was instructed to approach King Savang along the same lines, if feasible. The Secretary recognized that the lack of acceptable proposals on cabinet composition from Souvanna and Souphanouvong made it riskier for the US to undertake increased pressure against Phoumi. Hence he asked what plans Brown was developing for the formation of a united front with his Western colleagues to deal with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. In this connection, he noted, the British Foreign Office was strongly supporting the idea of a visit to Khang Khay by US officials Sullivan and Forrestal. It was assumed, the Secretary concluded, that the Embassy and MAAG were keeping close watch against military moves by Phoumi and that Ambassador Brown and his Country Team had prepared emergency plans for personnel protection and administrative measures in case Phoumi turned against the US or the US decided to take action against him.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1409, and Vientiane, 822, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Ambassador Brown, in the course of an audience granted by King Savang, presented the monarch with a letter in which President Kennedy warned that the only alternative to agreement on a coalition government was the resumption of full-scale hostilities, "which might well result in the destruction of Laos as a nation." The King read the letter without comment. The Department of State had instructed the Ambassador to hold the letter in reserve for use, if necessary, in connection with the negotiations between the Western Ambassadors and Souvanna (see item 6 March 1962).

After presenting the Presidential letter, Ambassador Brown expressed US concern over the lack of progress toward a coalition government and over the RLG's apparent unwillingness to accept a government headed by Souvanna. The Ambassador then asked if the King's failure, in his address to the National Assembly, to mention Souvanna indicated that the Prince's mandate to form a new government had been withdrawn (see item 11 March 1962). The

King, after informing the Ambassador that according to Phoumi negotiations with Souvanna had not been officially terminated, stated that he had not withdrawn Souvanna's mandate. This royal mandate, King Savang continued, could not constitutionally be revoked, although Souvanna might voluntarily surrender it.

Next the Ambassador observed that Phoumi might be under the impression that the US would come to his aid in the event of hostilities. The King, Ambassador Brown continued, should know that the President had sent Admiral Felt to inform Phoumi that such an impression was false. The King, however, stated that Phoumi understood the situation and had no illusions of US military support. The King also agreed with Brown's statement that the RLG had so conducted itself that the world would blame it if the Pathet Lao should resume the offensive.

In spite of Phoumi's statement (see item 19 March 1962) that the King would inform Brown that the Bangkok meeting between Phoumi and Harriman would not be held, no such statement was made. The King did, however, repeat that he would not head a government of councils (see item 17 February 1962).

Ambassador Brown then noted that Phoumi was being told that "right-wing Congressional opinion in the US" might force the Kennedy Administration to reverse its policy toward Laos. Any such advice, the Ambassador warned, was not based on fact. The King replied that he realized that the President "was master of his own policy" and then launched a defense of Phoumi.

According to the King, Phoumi could not be blamed for all that the RLG was doing. Although Phoumi lacked political skill, he did have "much support," since he "represented a Lao idea, namely, anti-Communism." Removing Phoumi would cause the disintegration of the FAR and, in general, of the anti-Communist forces within the kingdom. When asked if he considered Phoumi indispensable, the King replied, "Under the circumstances, practically yes."

The King then repeated his complaints about corruption and inefficiency within the RLG and described the antagonism in Laos between the northern and southern provinces. Although he reported a "growing, active hatred of Souvanna," which would make a coalition impossible, the King also indicated that the effort to form a coalition should be continued and that he would support such a government if one was formed. The hatred, to which the King referred, allegedly stemmed from Souvanna's willingness to accept aid from, and to establish diplomatic relations with, Communist China.

The possibility of serious food shortages in Laos by October 1962 also was mentioned by the King. In this regard, he prophesied that friction between the Pathet Lao and the followers of Kong Le, primarily over food and supplies, would deprive Souvanna of his last measure of support.



The King also referred to the surrender to Communism implicit in the acceptance of a Souvanna government. Since he believed that either the acceptance of Souvanna or the resumption of hostilities would result in a Communist victory, the King often repeated sentiments to the effect that there was nothing he could do and that it would be better to die than to capitulate.

The main problem, the King continued, was Viet Minh influence in a neutral Laos. Ambassador Brown replied that the Geneva agreement was designed to diminish such outside influence, but King Savang dismissed the statement as "pure theory." The US Ambassador then pointed out that, although the US, by failing to support Phoumi, would encounter the risks posed by certain undesirable features of the Geneva agreement, to support Phoumi would cause renewed fighting and assure the total failure of the Geneva accords.

In commenting upon the audience, Ambassador Brown pointed out that the King "obviously considered himself a spectator" to events in Laos, events about which he could do nothing. The King, although admitting that Souvanna alone could head a coalition, nevertheless entertained reservations concerning both the ability of the Prince and the very idea of a coalition in which the Pathet Lao would participate. "We can expect no help from the King," Ambassador Brown concluded. "His sympathies are already with Phoumi."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 682, 31 Jan 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1310, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Ambassador Addis engaged in a brief conversation with Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was en route to Khang Khay by way of Vientiane. The Soviet Ambassador accused the US of playing a "double game in Laos, with some Americans advising a peaceful solution and others advising obduracy." He stated that his Government believed that the US could so alter the situation in Laos that a solution would be possible. The time had come, Abramov concluded, for actions by the US rather than words.

The Soviets, Abramov continued, were inclined to "disinterest themselves in Laos." No early solution seemed likely, but perhaps some agreement could be reached after the rainy season. The Soviet diplomat did not threaten the resumption of hostilities.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1309, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 [REDACTED] the JCS reports of the arrival of one CARIBOU aircraft (an experimental 2-engine STOL aircraft under development for the Department of the Army) in Thailand for field tests in Laos, [REDACTED] It was to be tested by landings on varied unimproved helio strips under various load, fuel, range, and altitude conditions. (See item 17 April 1962.) [REDACTED]

20 Mar 62

In Bangkok, Ambassador Young spent nearly an hour discussing with Sarit, Thanat, and General Wallop the problem of Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman (see item 19 March 1962). As a result of this conversation, Sarit, who appeared frightened and concerned over the possible consequences of Phoumi's intransigence, directed General Wallop to go immediately to Savannakhet in order to press Phoumi to meet with Harriman at Bangkok or at some other acceptable site in Thailand. Both Sarit and Thanat repeatedly pledged to do everything possible to bring about talks between Phoumi and Harriman, to remove any lingering suspicion that Thailand was secretly supporting Phoumi, and to aid the US in arriving at a reasonable basis for compromise between Phoumi and Souvanna.

Sarit, insisting that he had no secrets from Ambassador Young regarding Laos, directed Thanat to reveal the contents of a telegram in which Phoumi repeated in essence the reasons he had given Hasey for refusing to confer with Harriman. Sarit then warned that Phoumi, though he would prove stubborn, should not be made to lose face, since the Lao General feared that his agreeing to meet Harriman might cost him the respect of his colleagues and of the King. Thanat added that the situation was very dangerous. Sarit, in response to Ambassador Young's comment that Phoumi was nearing a break with the US, said that the RLG's spurning of US support would be a disaster for both the Lao and Thai people.

Ambassador Young called Sarit's attention to the belief, shared by "many people" and nurtured by Phoumi, that Thailand was secretly encouraging the present policies of the RLG. Sarit thereupon "bellowed a vehement denial," stating that he had turned down Phoumi's every request for supplies and other aid. In reporting this, Young stated that he was inclined to believe Sarit.

As to the method of influencing Phoumi, the Thai leaders favored working through Lao cabinet members and military officers, who might persuade Phoumi that in reversing his stand he would lose neither the respect of his peers nor the support of the US.

In a private conversation with the Ambassador, General Wallop "guessed" that Sarit might go so far as to break completely with Phoumi if the latter refused to see Harriman or cooperate with the US at all. Sarit might tell Phoumi that "he was through with him and would not have anything more to do with him either officially or otherwise." General Wallop also confirmed Sarit's statement that he had refused Phoumi's request "to 'slip down' to Bangkok this week to see Sarit alone and with Secretary Harriman." (See item 22 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1441, 20 Mar 62.

20 Mar 62

Assistant Secretary Harriman, at Hong Kong en route to his scheduled meeting with Sarit at Bangkok, informed the Secretary of State that, because of Phoumi's reported refusal to meet Harriman and Sarit (see item 19 March 1962),



it might be necessary to invoke limited military sanctions "to make him understand he cannot defy the US and expect continuing US support." In requesting authority to impose such sanctions at his own discretion, Harriman assured the Secretary of State that he would resort to military sanctions only in extreme circumstances.

Acting Secretary of State Ball on the same day replied that the President was reluctant to authorize military sanctions because the action could be used by Phoumi to create the impression that he had been "undercut by the US at a time when he could have held his own." Although the President was unwilling to apply sanctions until further efforts had been made to obtain Phoumi's cooperation, he would welcome further recommendations after Harriman had seen Sarit and after it had been determined whether or not Thai pressure had actually brought Phoumi to Bangkok (see item 20 March 1962).

The Secretary then repeated the President's desire that Harriman make it absolutely clear to Sarit and Phoumi that under existing "international circumstances," no matter which side might break the cease-fire, the President would be unable to intervene in support of Phoumi. No matter how the resumption of hostilities might come about, Secretary Ball continued, "the image here" would be that the fighting had resulted from Phoumi's intransigence.

In conclusion, Harriman was advised that the President considered it very important that Harriman talk with Phoumi, even if it were necessary to prolong his stay in Bangkok to do so.

(S) Msgs, Hong Kong to SecState, 1010, 20 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1424, 20 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that, given the apparent impossibility of getting Phoumi to come there, the President did not preclude Harriman's going to Vientiane to see Phoumi if necessary and in fact hoped that this might be arranged in a dignified manner satisfactory to Harriman. Such a visit would provide an opportunity for Harriman to meet the members of the RLG face-to-face. He might then be able to find a face-saving way out for Phoumi, and he could convince the entire RLG officialdom of the US determination to carry through the Souvanna solution. Therefore, if Harriman concurred, the Secretary suggested that both the Vientiane and Bangkok Embassies try to arrange for a formal RLG invitation to Harriman to visit Vientiane.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1428, and Vientiane, 825, 21 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62

The RLG Ambassador in Washington at his own request called upon Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson. During their conversation, the Deputy Under Secretary reaffirmed "in plain terms" US policy on Laos by informing the Ambassador that, if hostilities were resumed, the US would not come to Phoumi's assistance. In response to a question by the Ambassador, Secretary Johnson also stated that US cash grants would continue to be suspended. Johnson emphasized the importance of Phoumi's negotiating

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in good faith and of his yielding to the center group the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The RLG Ambassador dwelt upon the belief of the RLG that US insistence on a Souvanna government would lead to the Communist domination of Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 834, 23 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62 During a conference in Hawaii, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, JCS, the Chief of Staff, Army, CINCPAC, and others discussed the current situation in Laos and possible future courses of action there.

The Secretary of Defense, after being advised by PACOM Intelligence that the FAR capabilities had not increased relative to those of the enemy since the cease-fire (see item 16 February 1962), observed that the US appeared to have three alternative courses available in the future in Laos: 1) withdrawal of "all US personnel" from Laos and cessation of military assistance to the FAR; 2) "sitting tight" by maintaining the MAAG in Laos and continuing to support the FAR; or 3) introducing US combat forces, with or without SEATO participation or sanction.

Before discussion began on these alternatives, the Secretary asked the current capability of enemy forces to capture the major cities of northern and central Laos. The Secretary was unpleasantly surprised when PACOM Intelligence estimated that, with Viet Minh participation, the enemy could overrun these centers within 30 days. The only major problems that PACOM Intelligence saw the enemy encountering were Meo operations in the Plaine des Jarres and friction between Kong Le and Pathe Lao units. To these problems, CINCPAC added two: the weather, and the vulnerability of the enemy logistical complex to air attack. CINCPAC felt that, if US air strikes were authorized against an enemy offensive, that offensive could be "severely blocked" (presumably by an otherwise-unaided FAR).

Turning to the alternatives put forward by the Secretary, CINCPAC opined that the US should "wait it out," letting the Lao work out their own problems in their own way, while leaving the MAAG in place to support the FAR. If hostilities resumed, however, the US would have either to support the RLG or "give up Laos." CINCPAC felt that the US decision in this case should be to continue supporting the RLG by initiating a graduated response to the Communist attack. Questioned on these views by the Secretary, CINCPAC went on to say that the initial objective of any US military response should be support of the FAR in holding key cities. Later, operations could be expanded to include retaking the Plaine des Jarres and securing southern Laos. The US operations should not, however, encompass the recapture of Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces, the original bailiwicks of the Pathet Lao.

The Chairman, JCS, then commented upon the alternatives presented by the Secretary. According to the Chairman, a showdown was approaching in Laos. The Chairman did not

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believe that the US Government was likely to change its policy to allow the introduction of US or SEATO forces into Laos; nor did he believe that a Lao coalition government would be formed. In these circumstances, the Chairman believed that the US should continue to support the FAR. The US should attempt to determine "the best situation we can get with Phoumi holding his ground"; even if Phoumi could only hold southern Laos, the US should support him in this endeavor. The Chairman hoped that the US would not take the irrevocable step of withdrawing the MAAG; he believed this would "hand the country over to the communists and have a devastating psychological effect on Thailand." The Chairman thought that Phoumi should regroup his forces in the South--particularly those forces he was currently massing at Nam Tha--and form a defensive line from just north of Thakhek eastward to just north of Tchepone.

The Secretary of Defense ended this discussion by stating that the basic issue at hand appeared to be whether or not to withdraw MAAG Laos. The Secretary said that he had heard enough to convince him that the MAAG should remain. In this conclusion, all conferees agreed.  
(TS) JCS 2343/99, 27 Mar 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 4.

22 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State suggested to Harriman in Bangkok that during his prospective visit to Vientiane he might, in addition to his main task, pursue the limited objective of bringing about a resumption of negotiations among the three Princes. If resumed, such negotiations might "inch the two sides closer to agreement," or, at least, prevent deterioration by keeping the talking going. To bring this about, Harriman might try to convince Phoumi that he could not effectively fix blame on the other side for being unyielding until he had invited negotiations and carried them far enough to discover what sort of cabinet distribution and arrangements for the military establishment he actually could obtain.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1447, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Ambassador Young reported that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat had indicated that Thailand had no objection to proceeding with SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 16 March and 23-28 April 1962). Harriman had approved the staging of the exercise, provided that no airdrops occurred in Thailand close to the Lao border and that publicity was kept to a minimum, with appropriate mention of the fact that AIR COBRA had been planned and scheduled for a long time.

(On the following day the Acting Secretary of State approved the exercise, subject to the provisions listed by Harriman.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1459, 22 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1461, 23 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Harriman and Ambassador Young, together with William H. Sullivan of Harriman's staff, called upon Premier Sarit and Foreign Minister Thanat to discuss means by which

Phoumi might be induced to cooperate with the US and Thailand in serious negotiations toward the formation of a Lao coalition. This meeting, during which Sarit reiterated his complete acceptance of US objectives, was necessary because of Phoumi's rejection of the earlier Thai attempt to win his cooperation (see item 20 March 1962).

Once again, the overture to Phoumi was entrusted to General Wallop, who initially was to propose that Phoumi come to Nong Khai (on the Thai side of the Mekong River near Vientiane), meet with Sarit and Harriman, and then escort Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with King Savang and subsequent discussions with Phoumi and the entire RLG cabinet. As a fall-back position, Wallop was authorized to propose that Harriman go to Vientiane for the royal audience, return with Phoumi to Nong Khai for a tripartite meeting with Sarit, then go again to Vientiane for conversations with Phoumi and the cabinet. Sarit was given the US view that, whichever proposal might be adopted, it was most important that Sarit and Harriman meet jointly with Phoumi "in order to avoid 'double-faced' tactics which Phoumi has pursued in the past." (See item 23 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1460, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62

[REDACTED] the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, JCS, a memorandum, "Reactions to Certain US Courses in Laos," together with a copy of the cable from White House assistant Michael Forrestal to which it responded. Forrestal, on the basis of his recent observations in Laos, believed it likely that the US would soon have to apply severe military sanctions against Phoumi. In anticipation of this, he suggested [REDACTED] might undertake two investigations, the first to evaluate the chances of renewed hostilities by the Pathet Lao after the suspension of US aid, and the second to ascertain what methods the US might employ to replace Phoumi with a new right-wing political figure during the confused period following the suspension of US aid.

[REDACTED] If the US were to withdraw its training teams, military advisers, and most importantly, its logistical support of the Lao Army, the Communists would be capable of rapidly defeating the RLG forces and seizing the major urban areas remaining under government control. [REDACTED] did not believe that the Communists would immediately attempt to capture Laos by military means since they would think their chances of success by political means had been greatly enhanced by the US withdrawal of support. Moreover, the USSR would wish to maintain the appearance of having negotiated in good faith for the creation of a coalition government. In any event, [REDACTED] the Communists would continue to maintain military pressure on Phoumi, increasing that pressure at times to improve their political leverage.

The assumed US course of action, the report continued, would have an immediate demoralizing effect upon the RLG and its armed forces; the government could survive at

most only three or four months without US support, and it was unlikely that Phoumi could hold the armed forces together for long. The Communists would probably wait for the RLG to collapse or for Phoumi and Boun Oum to accept Souvanna's terms for a coalition government.

in spite of these probabilities, the chances would be "less than even" that Phoumi and Boun Oum would agree to join a coalition under Souvanna. Even if they were to agree to participate in a coalition government, they would probably do so without any serious intent of cooperating with Souvanna, since both considered Souvanna a Communist tool. Rather, they would attempt to undercut Souvanna and his followers as well as the Pathet Lao.

four other courses of action open to Phoumi and Boun Oum, but found it impossible to estimate with confidence or precision the odds on any course. Their most likely choice would be self-imposed exile; both almost certainly had the means to support such a course, and they were probably at times weary and discouraged with the struggle. If their pride and determination outlawed this course of action, the RLG leaders might seek to bring about a partition of Laos or initiate some desperate military action. In either case there would be a sharp military reaction by the Communist forces, and Phoumi's troops would probably be defeated. It was also possible that Phoumi and Boun Oum would retire into the hills and seek to carry on a guerrilla war against any new Lao Government. this course of action was least likely to be implemented, since neither leader would relish such a life and they could not command the loyalties of many Lao troops for long without assured sources of maintenance and pay.

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In a 22 March cable, the Department of State questioned the Laos Country Team on its recommendations for a civic action program among the Kha tribesmen (see item 23 February 1962). While agreeing with the Country Team that the Kha should be helped economically and socially as well as trained militarily, the Department of State wanted more assurance that the projects could be completed without undue delay or danger of abandonment. Among the questions the Department asked were the following:

1. How long would it take to complete the recommended projects?
2. Assuming that MAAG Laos would be withdrawn and that AID Washington would be unable to provide personnel quickly, were the projects feasible or were they overly ambitious in terms of the number of US personnel that would be available in Laos?
3. What would the long-term AID/Laos personnel requirements be?

4. Would the Kha be capable of maintaining the projects after completion? If not, what would be the continuing costs to the US?

5. Would the locally hired technicians be Lao or third-country nationals? If Lao, could the RLG provide adequate personnel?

6. How would Lao civil authorities be brought into the program and responsible local self-government thus be promoted?

On 29 March, the Country Team replied to the State Department questions as follows:

1. The proposed projects would be completely self-sustaining by July 1964.

2. The projects were feasible, even with MAAG withdrawal and without immediate AID replacement personnel. During the time that MAAG Laos had responsibility for the program, a Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT), as requested by CHMAAG (see item 8 March 1962), would be necessary.

3. AID/Laos would need one project manager, third-country technicians, and replacements for the CAMTT, when and if it was withdrawn and for one AID public works engineer.

4. The Kha had only a limited capability to maintain the proposed projects; they would need technical assistance throughout the 27-month duration of the projects. The total cost, through completion of the projects, would be approximately \$186,000.

5. The locally hired technicians would be third-country nationals, probably Thai. The RLG would not provide the required technicians initially.

6. Since the Kha program was not necessarily tied to any particular regime in Laos, AID/Laos would strive over the next year to associate native civil authorities with the programs. Under the existing situation, however, the program must continue to be controlled primarily by the US, although the RLG had "given it full backing" (CHMAAG had justified this US control on the basis of Lao-Kha animosities; see item 8 March 1962).

The Country Team emphasized again (see item 23 February 1962) in its discussion of the program that time was of the essence. The success of MAAG [REDACTED] to form additional Kha ADCs depended upon US response to the economic needs of the Kha. Also, the monsoon season would begin in May and interfere with the construction projects upon which the progress in the other projects hinged.

The individual projects had been so designed that they could be terminated after six months with a net gain to the US and benefits to the Kha, the Country Team

continued. They were inseparable parts of the coordinated US program to consolidate anti-Communist forces on the Bolovens Plateau and, eventually, to interdict the "Ho Chi Minh trail." The US program did not have to be large, but it had to be timely. The program had suffered already because the US had not yet given evidence that it planned to initiate aid programs for the Kha who had taken up arms to clear the Pathet Lao from the area. MAAG Laos had detailed one officer as a part-time civic action coordinator to initiate those projects that did not require material assistance. This US officer, assisted to only a limited extent by one MTT, had been well received, but he could make only limited progress without technical and material assistance (see items 8 March, 6 April, and 4 May 1962).

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 827, 22 Mar 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1359, 29 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that the President had again considered Harriman's views on the imposition of military sanctions and had reaffirmed his conclusion that it would be unwise to cut off military supplies to the RLG at present, since the move would give Phoumi and others an opportunity to exploit false charges that the US had destroyed the freedom of Laos "at a time when, they claimed, Phoumi was still able to hold on" (see item 20 March 1962). The President did authorize Harriman to inform Phoumi that he was going to recommend to the US Government that military aid be suspended, if the talks with Phoumi took a course that convinced Harriman this was desirable.

Further, the President suggested the possibility that the high-level approaches being made to Phoumi by Harriman, Sarit, and others were feeding his ego in a way that was making him even less tractable. The President suggested for Harriman's consideration that the adoption of "an appearance of detachment" with respect to Phoumi might be more productive. What the President had in mind was that "Harriman could again make clear to Phoumi that he can have no basis for any belief that US would militarily intervene on his behalf, pointing out that during the past two weeks consultation with Congressional leadership had demonstrated that the Congress is strongly against any intervention in Laos, and that members of the JCS have recommended against such intervention." Phoumi should therefore be under no illusion whatever that any maneuvering on his part could draw the United States into hostilities in Laos. If Phoumi, realizing this US attitude, chose a policy that would bring ruin to Laos, the full responsibility would be his. The US would no longer "cajole or run after him."

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1451, 23 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

Harriman forwarded to the Secretary of State General Wallop's report of his interview with Phoumi and an account of Hasey's subsequent discussion with Phoumi. Harriman concluded that Phoumi was "completely" defying the United States. Since Souvanna appeared ready to leave for Paris and no "alternative to Phoumi" had been developed, Harriman urgently



requested authority to bring specific pressure--military sanctions--to bear against Phoumi. These sanctions, he believed, might cause Souvanna to remain in Laos and also lead to the emergence of another leader whom the US could support in place of Phoumi.

The basis for Harriman's recommendation was the fact that Phoumi, after accepting Sarit's invitation to meet Harriman at Nong Khai and then escort him to Vientiane for conferences with the King and cabinet (see item 22 March 1962), had told Hasey that it must be understood that he was not yet ready to yield either the Defense or Interior portfolios. Also, Phoumi had falsely told Hasey that the invitation delivered by General Wallop was in Harriman's name rather than coming from Sarit. Although General Wallop had denied mentioning any specific proposals, Phoumi informed Hasey that Harriman was seeking acceptance of a troika, with representatives of the right, left, and center in the Ministries of both Defense and Interior.

Replying the same day, Acting Secretary of State Ball informed Harriman that the President did not feel he could modify the instructions he had just given (see previous item 23 March 1962). The President, however, was anxious to help in any way he could "below the level of military sanctions."

"We have searched here without success," Secretary Ball continued, "for actions we could authorize which would give you leverage to move Phoumi." In dealing with other members of the RLG, however, Harriman was empowered to "commit whatever funds of the type authorized for Phoumi you feel would be helpful under the circumstances."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1462, 23 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 829, and Bangkok, 1456, 23 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

Secretary of State Rusk, in Geneva for the Disarmament Conference, discussed the Laotian question with Co-Chairman MacDonald. The latter offered his views on the personalities involved, Soviet attitudes, and certain problems that might arise.

MacDonald opened by stating that, although the agreement on Laos prepared by the Conference was virtually completed, Phoumi's stubbornness blocked all action. He described Phoumi as completely unreliable and said there were "serious questions as to his mental capacity to grasp the realities of the present situation in Laos." The problem was compounded, he observed, by the "passive, weathervane qualities of the King." Secretary Rusk added that King Savang was apparently unaware that his throne could be at stake. MacDonald also mentioned the danger that Souvanna's personal pessimism might lead him to give up his mandate in disgust, thus playing into the hands of the RLG.

MacDonald answered a question from Rusk concerning Soviet attitudes by saying that he believed the Soviets "now trusted the President and . . . Harriman" regarding US sincerity in seeking a coalition cabinet under Souvanna,



but they had occasional doubts, undoubtedly deriving from an inability to understand why US pressure had not yet brought Phoumi to heel, concerning the sincerity of US policy implementation. MacDonald was convinced that the Soviets wanted an agreement, that their rivalry with the Chinese Communists was an important factor in the Soviet attitude, and that, in general, they did not want to disturb conditions in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Laos. Secretary Rusk tacitly indicated his agreement with this analysis by describing as "significant" the fact that the Soviets had abstained from exploiting the bickering among the three Princes in December 1961. MacDonald cautioned, however, that "time was not necessarily on our side," since pressure from the Communist Chinese and North Vietnamese might eventually force the Soviets to change their policy, while Souvanna might become sufficiently discouraged to withdraw. MacDonald concluded by praising Harriman's "patience and skill," and stated that success would largely depend on his current mission to Bangkok.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1139, 24 Mar 62.

24 Mar 62

Harriman, with Thai Premier Sarit, Foreign Minister Thanat, and General Wallop, and US officials Sullivan, Forrestal, and Ambassador Young, met with Phoumi and General Bounleut at Nong Khai, Thailand. Harriman reported that "Sarit put the situation so squarely to Phoumi that I was able to support his position." Sarit told Phoumi he had the choice of being responsible for the military take-over of his country by the Pathet Lao or of working to help a Souvanna government maintain its independence, with the support of the United States, Thailand, and other friendly countries. Thanat then suggested that the Defense and Interior problem might be handled by a troika arrangement. Either the three top positions in each Ministry might be divided among the factions, or a three-man committee, one member from each faction, might head each of these key agencies. In addition, Phoumi was urged to have the RLG invite Souvanna to Vientiane, but Harriman emphasized that any such meeting would be useless unless Phoumi was prepared to negotiate in good faith regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior.

Phoumi rejected the Thai and US arguments on the ground that Souvanna had failed to carry out the royal mandate to form a new government. He did, however, agree to consult his RLG colleagues regarding future negotiations, and he said he would not object to inviting Souvanna to come to Vientiane.

The three-hour discussion was followed by lunch, after which Phoumi escorted Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with the King and, on 25 March (see item), a meeting with the RLG cabinet. In Harriman's opinion, Sarit's staunch support of the US position was the only favorable development during the session.

The audience granted by King Savang, which Harriman dismissed as a "two-hour futile talk . . . hardly worth reporting," was even less productive than the meeting

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earlier in the day at Nong Khai. After stressing the world-wide support for US policy regarding Laos, Harriman declared that Phoumi, who dominated the RLG, was the sole obstruction to the attainment of a peaceful, independent, and neutral Laos that was unified under a coalition government headed by Souvanna.

King Savang thereupon came to the defense of Phoumi, who, according to the King, had impressive popular support as a "patriotic national leader fighting both the Communists and the traditional Viet Minh enemy." The King also referred to the possibility that Boun Oum might seek the partition of Laos and stated his own objections to any coalition in which the Pathet Lao were represented.

Regarding the suspension of US aid, the King declared that the US action had made "all Laotians feel that they are no longer independent." Harriman replied that the US, since it too was independent, could not allow a foreign leader such as Phoumi to dictate its policy. Thus, as the King acknowledged, the US was under no obligation to assist a foreign government of whose actions it disapproved.

Harriman then warned that Phoumi's intransigence could result in the loss of US support and, eventually, in the destruction of both the kingdom and the institution of the monarchy. The King, however, seemed resigned not only to the loss of US support but to the possible overthrow of the monarchy. Other dynasties, he observed, had also come to an end.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1325, 25 Mar 62; 1336, 26 Mar 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

25 Mar 62 Harriman and members of the US Country Team met at Vientiane with Boun Oum, Phoumi, and key members of the Lao cabinet. Phoumi, in opening the meeting, declared that the US and the RLG agreed on the need for a peaceful solution to the Lao crisis and on the necessity of forming a coalition government. The conflict between the two nations arose from differences of opinion regarding the suitability of Souvanna to serve as Prime Minister of the coalition. The RLG, Phoumi continued, did not think that Souvanna was suited to the task.

Sisouk, during a review of recent political developments, then claimed that the rightist faction had developed its current policies with the advice of the US and that the initial overthrow of Souvanna had been accomplished at the suggestion of the US, UK, and France. The RLG, Sisouk continued, could not understand the change in US policy whereby Souvanna had become acceptable. He asked whether the Soviet Union had given the US assurances of which the RLG was unaware. Ngon Sananikone followed with a brief explanation of the RLG's distrust of the Soviet Union and lack of confidence in Souvanna.

Harriman attempted to reply to the RLG in the spirit of President Kennedy's letter to King Savang (see item 19 March 1962). He noted that all the friends of the RLG,

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including Sarit, were urging the acceptance of Souvanna as the alternative to disaster. Since the King had refused to participate actively in a coalition government, there remained, indeed, no alternative except Souvanna. Harriman then touched upon the "flexibility" that remained in negotiations concerning the Ministries of Defense and Interior. He outlined the steps that would follow the formation of a coalition government and pointed out that these steps--the withdrawal of foreign troops, the integration of Lao forces, and the elections--would provide opportunities to judge Communist intentions. The US, moreover, would support the FAR until integration was completed. Economic aid also would be continued, but only within the framework of a coalition government.

Phoumi replied that the RLG could not accept Souvanna, for the Prince had failed to form a new government. Although the King might summon Souvanna to Vientiane to report on his efforts, serious negotiations toward a Souvanna-led coalition were out of the question. If the US should decide to abandon Laos, Phoumi added, this decision "would be most regrettable."

Harriman responded by warning the assembled cabinet members that they were assuming responsibility for the destruction of Laos and by advising them, "as a friend," to reconsider.

Although the meeting ended on this discordant note, Harriman remained hopeful that Sarit could influence the RLG to accept Souvanna and to negotiate in good faith.

(For the initial RLG reaction to Harriman's advice, see item 28 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1478, 26 Mar 62.

25 Mar 62 Boun Oum transmitted a royal request that Souvanna come to Vientiane on the following day to meet Vincent Auriol, ex-President of France, who was visiting Vientiane to participate in ceremonies being held by the Lao Veterans' Association. Souvanna, on the following morning, declined the invitation because of ill health and stated that he intended to leave "very soon" for France in order to obtain medical treatment.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1328, 25 Mar 62; 1329, 26 Mar 62.

26 Mar 62 Harriman informed the Secretary of State that, subsequent to his own recent conversation with King Savang (see item 24 March 1962), French ex-President Vincent Auriol had been granted a royal audience. The King, though he covered much the same ground as he had with Harriman, "let the cat out of the bag" by stating that he believed the RLG would obtain greater US support if it faced the Communists directly instead of through a Souvanna coalition.

As Harriman and Auriol had previously agreed, Auriol urged the King to summon the Princes to his palace, keep them there until they had reached an agreement, and then summon the Western, and possibly the Soviet, Ambassadors to obtain from them firm assurance that the agreement

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would be honored. The King agreed that these tactics were worth considering.

Harriman later encouraged Auriol to repeat this advice if he should again call upon the King. Auriol might, if he deemed it useful, add that Harriman heartily endorsed the plan.

(S) Msg, Gangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

26 Mar 62

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane, after conferring with the Western Ambassadors and with the Indian ICC representative, forwarded to the Secretary of State an estimate of the effects of the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) and a series of steps that the Western diplomats believed would be useful in bringing about fruitful negotiations regarding the composition of a coalition government.

In assessing the effects of the Harriman visit, the diplomats concluded that the RLG had realized its error in rigidly opposing US policy. The basis for this estimate was the RLG's issuance, after Harriman's meeting with the cabinet, of a press release that was far milder in tone than the remarks of the cabinet members themselves. This statement had stressed that the main problem was control over Defense and Interior rather than the choice of Souvanna as Prime Minister. In addition, it seemed that Phoumi, in an effort to appease Harriman, had been most eager to take advantage of French ex-President Auriol's desire to see Souvanna.

Souvanna, however, had made a tactical error in rejecting the royal invitation to confer with Auriol. The Ambassadors doubted that Souvanna was seriously ill but believed instead that he merely wished to avoid bilateral discussions that might antagonize Souphanouvong and the Chinese Communists. Whatever his reasons, Souvanna's refusal would be interpreted by RLG propagandists as an insult to the King and as evidence of Souvanna's submission to the Communists.

After thus interpreting recent events, the Counselor set forth three steps that the Western diplomats had agreed would be useful in bringing about worthwhile negotiations:

1. A visit by Harriman to Thai Premier Sarit. Either Wallop or Thanat, it was hoped, would afterward continue to exert pressure on Phoumi as Sarit had previously directed (see item 22 March 1962).
2. A meeting between Sullivan and Sisouk, during which Sullivan, by contrasting the statements of the cabinet members with the official press release that had followed Harriman's visit, would seek to discover whether or not there was any possibility of further negotiations. If negotiations appeared possible, Sullivan would enter into discussions with Phoumi.
3. A visit by Addis to Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962). The British Ambassador would inform

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Souvanna that: a) the Thai Government was assisting the US in its efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate; b) Harriman had engaged in unsatisfactory talks with the King and cabinet; c) Souvanna had erred in refusing to talk with Auriol at Vientiane; and d) Sullivan was prepared to journey to Khang Khay (see items 27-28 and 31 March 1962).

The Western diplomats, however, did not agree concerning the importance of Souvanna's remaining in Laos. The French Ambassador believed that, since the passing of time would see the weakening of the RLG position as a result of Thai influence and US financial pressure, a brief visit by Souvanna to Paris could do no harm, provided the Prince made it clear he had not surrendered his mandate to form a new government. The British Ambassador, on the other hand, considered Souvanna's departure to be extremely risky and desired that the Allies attempt to persuade the Prince to remain in Laos.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1333, 26 Mar 62.

27 Mar 62 The airlift of the FAR 55th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, which had been discontinued after 16 March because of the enemy's interdiction of the airfield, was resumed. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire continued, with one of the FAR 105-mm. howitzers and a 75-mm. howitzer being damaged in the exchange.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 250840Z Mar 62; DA IN 214858, 26 Mar 62; 281210Z Mar 62.

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Sullivan, in a message to the Secretary of State, inquired if the Department had any comments on the instructions given him by Harriman regarding his forthcoming visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). According to Harriman, the major purposes of Sullivan's visit were to attempt to dissuade Souvanna from abandoning the effort to form a new government and to do whatever was possible for the Americans being held prisoner by the Pathet Lao.

In addition, Sullivan asked the authority, if Souvanna should insist upon journeying to Paris, to renew the earlier invitation (see items 25 and 30 June 1961) that the Prince visit Washington. The US, UK, French, and Australian diplomatic missions in Vientiane had endorsed this proposal.

On 28 March, the Secretary of State provided Sullivan with instructions to supplement those already given him by Harriman. Sullivan's primary mission in going to Khang Khay was, as Harriman had indicated, "to encourage Souvanna to keep trying." Sullivan, however, was to rely on his own judgment and that of his colleagues in determining whether to urge a meeting of the three factions, or even a conference between Souvanna and Boun Oum or Phoumi. The desirability of any such meeting would depend upon Addis's reception at Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962) and upon Phoumi's willingness to negotiate.

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Turning to the second point in Harriman's instructions, Secretary Rusk directed Sullivan to indicate to Souvanna and Souphanouvong, if such an approach seemed appropriate, that the release of the Americans held by the Pathet Lao "would have a favorable effect in the US" at a time when the Administration was "under attack by some US elements" for exerting pressure on Phoumi. If time permitted, Sullivan was to ask to visit the prisoners--Shore, McMorrow, Ballenger, and Wolfkill--who were believed to be on the Plaine des Jarres. Finally, Secretary Rusk instructed Sullivan to ask for assurances that Major Bailey was still alive, that the Pathet Lao would allow a Red Cross representative to interview him, and that the Pathet Lao would facilitate the exchange of mail with Bailey and with the other prisoners. (For an earlier discussion with Souvanna concerning the prisoners, see item 19 July 1961.)

The Secretary of State also approved the renewal of the earlier invitation to Souvanna for a visit to the United States. The renewed invitation would be issued in the name of the US Government and at Harriman's direction. Although exact details could be worked out later, Souvanna was to be told that he would be received by the President as well as the Secretary of State.

-(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1340, 27 Mar 62;  
SecState to Vientiane, 845, 28 Mar 62.

28 Mar 62 The JSSC circulated to the Chairman, JCS, to the Director, Joint Staff, and to other interested parties a report by Major General J.S. Holtner of a field trip to Southeast Asia (see item 4-18 February 1962).

Regarding over-all strategy, General Holtner observed that Southeast Asia must be treated as an entity, whereas current US efforts appeared to emphasize individual country programs. Although the area was fragmented in every respect, the Communist effort, he reported, transcended national boundaries and took advantage of the fragmentation. The United States was beginning to do this also, by training the Meo, Kha and Montagnard tribesmen, but "one strategy for all would improve the situation tremendously," he suggested.

The visit had modified General Holtner's previous assumption that "the terrain, logistics and communications of the area would make significant US military operations extremely hazardous." The terrain appeared difficult but not impossible; logistical facilities and communications were rapidly improving.

He found strategic intelligence, country by country, reasonably good, but no effort to collate it area-wide could be discerned. Tactical intelligence, on the other hand, was practically nonexistent, particularly in South Viet Nam, and until it could be developed and rapidly evaluated, success in operations would depend more on chance than on design.

Turning to Laos, General Holtner observed that the Communists had been more foresighted than the United States

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in recognizing that Laos was the strategic key to the entire area. He doubted that any coalition government would be able, even if it had the will, to stop Communist infiltration of other countries through Laos. Instead of exerting pressure on Phoumi to give way on the formation of a coalition government, it would be better as an interim solution to attempt to maintain the status quo, so as to give the United States freedom of action in the future. Meanwhile the FAR could continue to improve its capabilities. If the Communists sincerely desired a "truly neutral" coalition government, it should be their responsibility to exert pressure on Souvanna for compromises leading to a solution. The past history of the area convinced General Holtoner, however, that the Communists were not sincere.

The individual FAR soldier was a better fighter, according to General Holtoner, than State Department reports had made him out to be. General Boyle and his MAAG officers held the same view, but Ambassador Brown did not. The USMC representative on the field trip likewise did not share the opinion that the FAR could be developed into an effective fighting force.

The basic problem was inadequate leadership, General Holtoner continued. Poor leadership had hurt the operations in northwest Laos, particularly at Nam Tha, and as a result the regional commander had relieved three Group Mobile commanders. General Holtoner expressed particular concern about the FAR's defensive attitude and willingness to leave the initiative to the enemy. MAAG, through the White Star teams, was making every effort to instill an offensive spirit in the FAR forces. In the Nam Tha operation, General Holtoner continued, a Pathet Lao 120-mm. mortar, which continually interdicted the airfield, seemed to be the major element in turning the balance in favor of the enemy. The FAR forces could easily eliminate the mortar if they were authorized to conduct air operations.

General Holtoner reported that, contrary to official reports, the FAR "almost always" brought out their individual weapons when they were forced to withdraw. Although "in most instances" they abandoned crew-served weapons, they were being trained to render them inoperable by removing some major component.

Emphasizing the importance of training tribal fighters, such as the Meo and Kha, General Holtoner reported that one White Star base in the Bolovens Plateau had trained 100 Kha tribesmen, who were engaging in patrol operations; 200 more were being trained there. He agreed with General Boyle's recommendation that the number be increased to 1200 (see item 25 January 1962), because of the importance of the Bolovens Plateau to US contingency plans. General Boyle, in a briefing reported by the US Army member of the party, had stated that Meo tribesmen would move anywhere in Laos if they were assured that their families would be protected and cared for.



Among other points stressed by General Boyle in his briefing were: 1) Villagers were not interested in "a specific form of government" so long as they were left alone. 2) The FAR should be increased to a strength of 68,000 through recruitment by local commanders. 3) The French should have no military responsibility in Laos; the lack of FAR officers with command and staff competence was the result of French policy not to train the FAR forces. 4) Filipino technicians, of whom more than 400 were employed by MAAG, were extremely valuable. A further point, noted by the Army representative in the course of a briefing by US Special Forces personnel, was the urgent need for a good jungle boot.

While in Thailand, the party was informed that approximately 95 per cent of the 30-day reserve stocks being accumulated for Laos in Thailand (Project SALT SHAKER) was already in storage. Out of a total of 6,857 FAR personnel scheduled to receive training in Thailand, 4,226 had completed their training and 688 were in mid-course. Project EKARAD (a training program for 8 infantry battalions, 6 artillery batteries, and 1000 recruits) accounted for most of the total. In addition, Thailand had assisted by providing for duty in Laos 400 artillery, interpreter and specialist personnel of the Thai armed forces.

(TS) Chairman, Southeast Asia Study Group, "Report of Field Trip to Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand and Laos), 4-18 February 1962," JMF 9150/5420 (4 Feb 62).

28 Mar 62

CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to extend his existing planning for the withdrawal of personnel and equipment from Laos (see item 2 March 1962) by adding a plan for the contingency that the MAAG, following its withdrawal, might be ordered to return and quickly reestablish operations in Laos owing to deteriorating conditions there. When the foreign military forces withdrew from Laos, CINCPAC said, the disparate elements joined in the reconstituted FAR might drift apart, mutinies take place, and coups be attempted. Both the US and the Communists might then decide to re-enter Laos hurriedly and resume the support and control of their respective cohorts. CHMAAG should therefore plan, in coordination with CHJUSMAG Thailand, to establish in Thailand a cadre of MAAG Laos personnel and equipment, prepared to return to Laos and re-establish the MAAG in the shortest possible time. (See item 4 May 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 280002Z Mar 62.

28 Mar 62

The US Military Attache at Vientiane, during a party held by Phoumi, discussed the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) with members of the RLG, Thai and Vietnamese diplomats, and general officers of the FAR. The consensus of opinion was that the cabinet officers, as a result of Harriman's accusation that they were leading the kingdom to its destruction, had suffered such a severe loss of face that they had no choice but "to stand fast and unite against their accuser." In the opinion of USARMA, the attitude of RLG officials had changed from disagreement with and resentment of US policies to distrust and anger. There was, however, no



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doubt that the US could force the RLG from power. The question, according to USARMA, was whether the result would "best serve either the US or the free world in general."

(S) Msg, USARMA Laos to DA, DA IN 216390, 30 Mar 62.

28 Mar 62

During a visit to Khang Khay, Ambassador Addis informed Souvanna of recent developments, including Sullivan's readiness to come to Khang Khay. Souvanna said that Sullivan would be welcome, but Souphanouvong, though willing to see the US diplomat, did not seem enthusiastic about the proposed visit.

Souvanna then declared that, although his health had improved, he definitely would leave for Paris on 3 April. Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed that two or three months would pass before Phoumi began to feel the effects of US pressures. Thus, there was no possibility of Phoumi's giving in at this time and, consequently, no reason for Souvanna to postpone his journey to France. Souvanna indicated, however, that he would be prepared to return to Laos "at the appropriate time." Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong insisted that their goal was the formation of a coalition government in which Phoumi would participate.

Addis then pointed out that Souvanna's departure from Laos could result in the deterioration of the military and political situation. In the military sphere, US pressure would cause a gradual weakening of the FAR, thus creating a situation of which the Pathet Lao might be tempted to take advantage. In the political sphere, Souvanna's absence would leave a vacuum that some other individual might seek to fill. Souvanna, however, gave "firm assurances" that the Pathet Lao would be restrained and stated that he would, by means of various public statements, "put his departure in the proper political framework." The Prince emphasized that he had no intention of renouncing his mandate to form a new government.

In response to Addis' suggestion that he call a meeting of the three Princes at Luang Prabang, Souvanna maintained that there was no point in such a meeting at this time. He was, moreover, concerned for his personal safety in Luang Prabang, since he believed that Phoumi, goaded by US pressure, might have become desperate. Thus, Souvanna also declined to visit the King, although he was willing to render a written report of his progress toward a coalition. Unlike Souvanna, Souphanouvong seemed interested in a meeting of the Princes.

Souphanouvong replied to Addis' questions concerning the military situation by declaring that he had no intention of attacking. He did, however, accuse Phoumi of provocations, especially at Nam Tha. According to Souphanouvong, the FAR had massed 52 companies at Nam Tha (the MAAG estimate was 28) and had engaged in parachuting

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both men and supplies. If Phoumi persisted in such actions, Souphanouvong warned, "we will give him a coup de matraque." After thus threatening to bludgeon Phoumi, Souphanouvong agreed that provocations should be avoided and then declared that the Pathet Lao, whatever Phoumi might do, did not intend to capture such "important places" as Nam Tha, Luang Prabang, Thakhek Vientiane. Addis, however, considered Souphanouvong's remarks on the military situation to be the most unsatisfactory aspect of the visit.

Before leaving Khang Khay, Addis informed Soviet Ambassador Abramov of what the two Princes had said and emphasized the need to take precautions lest the situation, particularly the existing military stalemate, should deteriorate in Souvanna's absence. Addis reported that Abramov's attitude had been "receptive."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1355, 29 Mar 62.

29 Mar 62

According to the report of Ambassador Bruce, the British Foreign Office saw it as "abundantly clear" that Phoumi had no intention of agreeing to a government led by Souvanna. Noting that the Soviets seemed disposed to let the situation simmer along, the Foreign Office suggested that the Pathet Lao might be content to consolidate their control in areas currently held rather than initiate new attacks. The British saw real danger in the possibility that Phoumi might try to spark a resumption of hostilities. If he provoked the Pathet Lao, Phoumi might well suffer a swift defeat that would leave three-fourths of Laos under PL control. No possibility was seen of change in the situation through repudiation of Phoumi by his Vientiane followers. The Foreign Office had "toyed with the idea" of de-recognition of the Phoumi-Boun Oum group in favor of some sort of government to be established in Luang Prabang under Souvanna, but discussion had revealed "many absolute obstacles," including the King's opposition to Souvanna.

The Foreign Office expected to maintain the British Co-Chairman, MacDonald, in Geneva in order to preserve the existing machinery and hold open the possibility of reassembly of the Conference or reaffirmation of the cease-fire should the need arise. MacDonald had recently sent a personal letter to Souvanna asking him to remain in Laos. In the British view, however, it was likely that Souvanna would soon depart for Paris and that it might be difficult to get him to return. Commenting that this was the first time in some months that Foreign Office spokesmen had been unable to propose at least a theoretical way out of the Laotian imbroglio, Ambassador Bruce noted that they were anxiously awaiting any hopeful ideas that Harriman might have developed during his visits to Laos and Thailand.

(Instructions sent by the State Department on 31 March advised the Ambassador that the most important aspect of the Harriman visits had been the avowed readiness of the Thai leadership to attempt to induce Phoumi to enter into effective negotiations.)

(C) Msgs, London to SecState, 3581, 29 Mar 62; SecState to London, 5245, 31 Mar 62.

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30 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos published MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, setting forth procedures for the withdrawal of the MAAG. Consistent with the guidance set forth by the JCS and CINCPAC (see items 14 February and 2 March 1962), OPLAN 63-62 provided for a "phased and orderly withdrawal" of US military and third-country civilian personnel of the MAAG upon the formation of a Lao government of national unity and for the recovery of both US-owned equipment and MAP equipment that was excess to the needs of remaining US agencies and the new Lao Army. The OPLAN anticipated four phases of withdrawal operations: warning, assembly and withdrawal, operations in Thailand, and phase-out. It also planned for such actions as: 1) continuing FAR training programs to the extent possible; 2) evacuation of Thai volunteers in Laos; and 3) evacuation, after approval by the US Embassy, of Lao individuals.

(S) MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, 30 Mar 62; OSD(ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

30 Mar 62 Sullivan informed the Secretary of State that Ambassador Young, in arranging for Sullivan's passage through Thailand en route to Khang Khay, had requested that he return by way of Bangkok and reported on his visit (see item 31 March 1962). Sullivan had expressed his willingness to honor Young's request and, if desired, to brief officials of the Thai Government.

Secretary Rusk replied with full approval of Sullivan's undertaking to brief the Thai officials. Although the US was willing to await the result of Sarit's efforts to persuade Phoumi (see items 20 and 22 March 1962), the Secretary did not believe that time was "working in our favor at Xieng Khouang." For this reason, Sullivan was to ask "politely" for a schedule of these Thai efforts. General Wallop, Secretary Rusk noted, had indicated that he would not make another approach until he had more information on developments within the RLG. Since the Thai understood the Lao psychology better than did the Americans, Sullivan was not to exert undue pressure, but the Secretary nevertheless believed that the US should know Sarit's plans.

"Highest authority," Secretary Rusk continued, was again proposing that the US temporarily turn a "cold shoulder" to Phoumi (see item 23 March 1962). Such treatment, Rusk said, could include any or all of the following: 1) the recall of Hasey; 2) the relief, without replacement, of General Boyle; and 3) the recall of Ambassador Brown for consultations. Ambassador Young, Sullivan was advised, might find it desirable to obtain the advice of Thai officials on these measures.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1360, 30 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1496, 30 Mar 62.

30 Mar 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that Phoumi, in a further reorganization of the FAR (see item 19 January 1962), planned to place the Surface Defense Command (DS) under the National Security Forces Command (FSN), and to move DS headquarters from Savannakhet to Vientiane. According

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to Phoumi, his original plan to prepare a bastion in the South had been overtaken by events (particularly at Nam Tha, which "must be held at all cost"), and he was now making Vientiane the "center of major headquarters and activities." According to CHMAAG Laos, there were at least two other possible reasons for this move: 1) CHMAAG had long urged it as an organizational improvement; and 2) Phoumi might simply wish to obtain better personal control over his headquarters and commanders. CHMAAG also observed that Phoumi's professed abandonment of "moving South" would in no way prevent his actually performing such a move if he should find it expedient to do so.

(C) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 216994, 30 Mar 62.

31 Mar 62 Sullivan reported to the Secretary of State concerning various aspects of his two-day visit to Khang Khay. The Deputy Chief of the US Delegation to the Geneva Conference had been unable either to see the Americans held prisoner by the Pathet Lao or to gain acceptance by Souvanna of an invitation to visit the US (see item 27, 28 March 1962). He had, however, received Souphanouvong's promise to look after the prisoners.

The "only encouraging result" reported by Sullivan was the "considerable consensus" in favor of a troika arrangement for Defense and Interior. Souvanna, after first demanding personal control over the Ministries with a troika at the Secretaries-of-State level, agreed that, during the period when plans for an integrated army and for local administration were being formulated, a three-man council could control both Ministries. This council would consist of Souvanna, Souphanouvong, and Phoumi. After completion of the planning phase, responsibility would revert to Souvanna, who would serve as Minister of Defense and of Interior, as well as Prime Minister. Souphanouvong, however, refused to commit himself, stating instead that certain details would have to be worked out at a meeting of the Princes.

Sullivan believed that Souvanna might propose discussions among representatives of the three factions. These talks could provide Phoumi with a means of agreeing, without loss of face, to a meeting of the Princes at which he presumably would yield the Defense and Interior portfolios to Souvanna in return for a place in the proposed troika. Souphanouvong, unlike Souvanna, appeared to have no interest in Phoumi's saving face.

Although the "general attitude of all hands" at Khang Khay was that the US should exert pressure against Phoumi by applying military sanctions, Souphanouvong was the "most violent exponent of this thesis." Whereas Souvanna merely suggested the withdrawal of MAAG teams from FAR units and Abramov was willing to leave the details to the US, Souphanouvong insisted upon the immediate termination of all US military aid.

Sullivan asked for assurances that the Pathet Lao and the forces of Kong Le would not exploit the situation that would result from the application of military sanctions against Phoumi. Souvanna replied that Kong Le's troops definitely would not attack, and Abramov estimated that the situation would remain quiet for two or three months, but Souphanouvong used the occasion to denounce Phoumi for allegedly augmenting FAR forces in areas to which the Pathet Lao laid claim. Souphanouvong's threat to capture such places as Muong Houn and Ban Hat, which he alleged had been in the hands of the Pathet Lao when the cease-fire went into effect, triggered two "long and rather explosive arguments" with Sullivan. In spite of these differences, Souphanouvong presented the "picture of solicitude and charm" as the visit drew to a close.

When Souvanna, during one of these arguments, suggested that the Pathet Lao would seize these objectives "only if Phoumi used them offensively," Souphanouvong contradicted him, and Souvanna "stalked from the room." Sullivan, unable to obtain assurance that the Pathet Lao would not exploit the future weakness of the FAR, declared that he was unable to assess with any confidence Souphanouvong's intentions.

Souvanna, in a private conversation, told Sullivan that Souphanouvong mistrusted Phoumi, did not understand political affairs, and permitted himself to become overly excited about military matters. The US diplomat, however, assessed Souphanouvong quite differently. "In my own judgment," Sullivan reported, "Souphanouvong understands political affairs very well, but is a cocky little scrapper who smells victory."

Sullivan returned to Vientiane with an unsealed letter in which Souvanna told the French Ambassador that he was about to leave for Paris and that, for the present, all that could be done toward a solution was to induce Phoumi to yield the Defense and Interior portfolios and to accept a tripartite meeting to discuss the formation of a coalition government. In the meantime, the letter continued, Souvanna would await in Paris the results of US pressure on the RLG.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1372, 1373, 31 Mar 62; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1375, 1377, 1 Apr 62.

31 Mar 62

CINCPAC cautioned PACOM commanders that, notwithstanding recent news reports discounting the possibility of renewal of major offensives by either side in Laos, his opinion was that the situation continued to be "explosive." He cited particularly the report of the belligerent attitude displayed by Souphanouvong in a conversation with British Ambassador Addis on 28 March (see item). It was CINCPAC's opinion that Souphanouvong could at any time use any provocation by the RLG as an excuse for a major attack and that Phoumi also could initiate offensive

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operations "on his own." CINCPAC reminded the subordinate commanders that he had assured higher authorities that PACOM was maintaining a 96-hour readiness posture for CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Laos/Viet Nam) and SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5-61.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to COMFIRSTMAW, et al., 312024Z Mar 62.

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1 Apr 62

At Nam Tha, the intermittent shelling of the airfield delayed the arrival of final elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion. In other respects the tactical situation remained unchanged.

A FAR task force, composed of the 3d Infantry Battalion and elements of the 15th Volunteer Battalion, was attacked and routed at Muong Houn in the Nam Beng Valley by an unidentified enemy force of battalion size. The FAR troops withdrew, leaving the town to the enemy. (Nearly two weeks later, on 12 April, major elements of the FAR force were still dispersed and some of them unlocated. The flight did not stop until the Mekong River was reached.)

In central Laos the FAR also encountered a setback in the vicinity of Tha Thom. A counterattack met with limited success.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 301045Z Mar 62; 011015Z Apr 62; 041015Z Apr 62; 120945Z Apr 62; 171000Z Apr 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 14-62, 5 Apr 62.

2 Apr 62

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane inquired of the French Ambassador concerning any impressions of political significance or any concrete results that might have emerged from ex-President Auriol's stay in Vientiane (see items 25 and 26 March 1962). According to the Ambassador, although Auriol's advice would be seriously considered, his approaches did not cause the King or the RLG to alter their positions.

In his conversation with King Savang, Auriol had advised the monarch that the Lao people should solve their nation's domestic problems and that mediation among the political factions was a royal responsibility. The King's response to this advice was "a succession of contradictory statements," which led Auriol to believe that the Lao monarch, though disturbed by Harriman's warning of the danger to his throne, was most annoyed by the suspension of US aid. When the King repeated his complaint that the suspension of cash grants because of a conflict in policy had made the Lao feel that they were not independent, Auriol observed that, by this standard, the Lao people would not feel independent until all outside aid had been ended.

Auriol did, however, succeed in eliciting a royal invitation calling upon Souvanna to visit Vientiane. According to the French Ambassador, Auriol had expected genuine results from this invitation and had been disappointed by Souvanna's refusal.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1386, 2 Apr 62.

2 Apr 62

Ambassador Gavin relayed a report from the French Foreign Office that Ambassador Falaize had been approached by Sisouk of the RLG concerning the dispatch of a RLG mission to Europe to seek aid as a substitute for that cut off by the United States. Although West

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Germany was the principal target, Sisouk clearly was interested in sounding out the French as well. Falaize, however, remained noncommittal. The French considered the entire approach in keeping with their view of Sisouk as "completely unattuned to international realities."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4652, 2 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Souvanna left Khang Khay for Paris. In what the US Embassy termed an "unhelpful departure statement," he expressed regret that his efforts so far had failed to create a coalition government and charged that "the ill will" and constant opposition of the RLG had brought this about. Souvanna then rejected Phoumi's plan for a government of six councils headed by the King (see items 25 January and 17 February 1962). The King, Souvanna explained, was venerated by the people and therefore should not be drawn into politics.

Souvanna called upon the United States to urge the RLG to agree to a tripartite meeting so that a coalition government might rapidly be formed. To demonstrate to the world its sincere desire for a peaceful settlement, the US Government would have to withdraw its military support from Phoumi and Boun Oum. Souvanna's forces, the statement continued, would not "seek to profit from this withdrawal of military aid to attack the Savannakhet troops except when the latter encroach upon the zones controlled by our forces."

Souvanna said he was going to Paris to see his family and to seek medical care. He cautioned his followers to beware, during his absence, of "the enemy that is seeking to sow discord among us . . . and between us and the [NLHX]." "If we are vigilant and strongly united, we shall without the slightest doubt win in the end."

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1385, 2 Apr 62;  
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1394, 4 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Phoumi granted an interview to Sullivan, who had just returned from Khang Khay, and Creel of the US Embassy. Sullivan, although he avoided mention of the invitation to Souvanna to visit the US, provided Phoumi with a "fairly complete rundown" on his recent visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). In reply to Phoumi's questions concerning Souvanna's intentions, Sullivan stressed the fact that the Prince, though he definitely was leaving for Paris, had no intention of surrendering his mandate to form a new government.

Following Sullivan's report, Phoumi, during a lengthy conversation which "became heated at points," charged that the US, for reasons he could not understand, was abandoning him and betraying itself by attempting to "impose Souvanna on the Lao people." Although he did not specifically reject the troika concept that had been discussed at Khang Khay, Phoumi spurned every suggestion that he adopt a more flexible negotiating position.

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In addition, Phoumi argued that Souvanna, by eight months of unsuccessful efforts, had proved himself incapable of forming a new government. The King might well ask Souvanna, when the two next met, to surrender his mandate. Phoumi then intimated that the RLG, using Souvanna's trip to Paris as justification, might take some public action to indicate that it no longer considered the Prince's mandate to be valid. Creel thereupon warned Phoumi that any such action at this time "would be considered most unwise by the US Government and would create 'a difficult situation.'" Phoumi replied that a "difficult situation already existed" but he indicated that the RLG had no immediate plans along this line (see item 11 April 1962).

Another complaint voiced by Phoumi was that, although there should be neither victor nor vanquished in a political settlement, the choice of Souvanna indicated that the Prince was, in fact, the victor. Sullivan, however, argued that Souvanna, an internationally accepted neutral, was the only possible symbol of a compromise in which there was neither victor nor vanquished.

Phoumi also said that the Agence France Presse would, on the following day, file a sensational story from Washington. The story would contain a US announcement regarding the Lao situation. Creel and Sullivan replied that "if Phoumi turned out to be right then his intelligence regarding the US Government's plans must be better than ours." The Americans surmised that either Phoumi had learned of the invitation to Souvanna but not of its rejection or he believed the US was about to announce "recognition" of Souvanna and corresponding "derecognition" of the RLG."

Finally, Phoumi indicated that the National Assembly was about to grant full powers to the King, who would then form a new government with himself as Prime Minister. Phoumi denied Sullivan's charge that such a maneuver would result in the partition of the kingdom. When Sullivan, recalling Savang's oft-expressed desire to avoid politics, challenged the claim that the King would serve as Prime Minister, Phoumi replied that Westerners did not understand the Royal mentality. Phoumi concluded by stating his intention to observe the military situation in the South. Boun Oum would remain in Vientiane during his absence.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1387, 3 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Prime Minister Sarit told the press that he was unable to force Phoumi to accept US policy since even the Lao King reportedly disagreed with it. Thailand did not want to interfere in Lao international affairs. Sarit further commented that suspension of US aid to Laos had some disadvantages since the Pathet Lao was still receiving Communist aid, "but it might be necessary to concede something now to gain more later." Ambassador Young interpreted Sarit's evasive comments as showing his concern for the impact of his actions on

influential sectors of Thai public opinion, which were strongly critical of US policy in Laos, and perhaps by a belief that avoidance of public acknowledgment of Thai efforts to change Phoumi's mind would make it easier for the Lao General to reverse himself.

(On 6 April, the State Department instructed Ambassador Young to raise the matter of the Sarit press conference at his next meeting with Thanat. Young should point out the ill effect Sarit's comments had had on Souvanna (see item 5 April 1962) and the fact that the comments contradicted Harriman's public statement that the present course of action in Laos was endorsed by practically all nations concerned, including Thailand. The Department sympathized with Sarit's problem of internal criticism but at the same time believed that he should take into consideration the larger question of public opinion outside Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1542, 4 Apr 62;  
SecState to Bangkok, 1535, 6 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Stopping over at Rangoon on his way from Laos to France, Souvanna had a short discussion with US Ambassador Everton. He told the Ambassador, as he had told the press upon his arrival, that the US must withdraw all military aid from the RLG in order to persuade that faction to cooperate in forming a coalition government. He also confirmed earlier reports (see item 31 March 1962) that his and Pathet Lao forces had promised not to launch an offensive within the next three months. (This promise appeared, however, in the context of Souvanna's remarks, to depend upon suspension of US military aid to the RLG and the consequent weakening of the RLG.)

During his talk with Ambassador Everton, Souvanna also commented upon the situation in South Viet Nam. To Souvanna, the only reasonable solution would be to remove Diem and replace him with some person who had the popular approval of the South Vietnamese people. The Lao Prince said that he could not understand the US supporting such an unpopular oppressor of the people. (On 7 April, CINCPAC called to the attention of the JCS these remarks about South Viet Nam. To CINCPAC, these remarks were evidence that Souvanna, far from supporting US efforts to assist South Viet Nam against the Communists, would work to overthrow Diem and would probably have "little interest" in curtailing Viet Cong movements through Laos.)

(C) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 764, 5 Apr 62;  
CINCPAC to JCS, 072035Z Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Secretary of State Rusk informed US Embassies in seven Far Eastern capitals and in Bonn that a RLG diplomatic effort might be launched to seek assistance in meeting the increasing difficulties caused by the withholding of the US monthly cash grant to Laos. Visits to the addressee capitals by special delegations from Laos

might be expected in addition to efforts by the resident RLG Ambassadors.

Although it would be unlikely, Rusk pointed out, that any offer of "practical" assistance would be forthcoming from the countries approached, it was important that the RLG not receive any encouragement or moral support in its current opposition to a negotiated peaceful settlement.

Rusk instructed US Ambassadors not to make a special approach on this subject, but they should use any available opportunity to point out to their host governments that a coalition government under Souvanna was the only feasible means to a peaceful settlement in Laos and that a peaceful settlement was the desired goal of all concerned. It was hoped that the several governments would respond to the RLG initiatives in this vein.

(C) Msg, SecState CIRC 1688, 4 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Ambassadors Young and Brown advised the Secretary of State of their joint assessment of the status of Thai efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate seriously for a coalition government and recommended certain courses of action that would constitute a concerted US-Thai attempt to further that undertaking. Ambassador Young asked for authorization to seek Thai agreement to the following as the best solution possible in Laos: a government with Souvanna as Prime Minister, Phoumi and Souphanouvong as Deputy Prime Ministers, and a distribution of the other cabinet posts among the three factions in accordance with an equitable formula; the Defense and Interior Ministries would be "neutralized" by organizing them in troika form as "committees of Defense and Interior" consisting of Souvanna, Phoumi, and Souphanouvong. This arrangement would mean a formal preservation of the status quo in Defense and Interior matters during a fairly lengthy provisional period, the Ambassadors admitted, but that would merely be an "honest recognition" of the political facts of life in Laos.

If the Thai Government agreed to the above, Young wished to engage Thanat in direct discussions with Phoumi, both to persuade Phoumi to accept this solution as a basis for negotiation and to discover what reasonable assurances he would desire concerning the practical functioning of the troika. To speed the pace of these discussions Young intended to warn Thanat that time was running out and that if Phoumi did not soon show a cooperative spirit, the "US would have to take actions in its own right." Young sought authorization to tell Thanat that in addition to the importance of ending quickly the potentially explosive military confrontation in Laos and bringing the Geneva accords into effect, early results were required because

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Phoumi seemed set on taking irrevocable action about 11 May in the direction of assigning full powers to the King. If Phoumi thus abrogated Souvanna's mandate and ended any hope of the "Souvanna solution" that the US and its Allies had been working for, it would be considered as "a direct challenge to the President which he could not allow to go without counter action."

The Ambassadors observed that this plan might not be acceptable to the RLG or even to Thailand. It was very likely, therefore, that the US would have to apply further pressure, probably in the form of military sanctions, against the RLG.

In his reply the following day the Secretary of State did not approve the recommendations for a concerted effort. He believed that the Thai leaders should be allowed to retain the initiative for the present in relations with Phoumi. "We are willing to let them work in their own way without specified time limit," the Secretary wrote, and the US would "coordinate closely with them without, however, calling all shots." The Thai leaders could be "encouraged" to explore further with Phoumi the idea of a troika in Defense and Interior, if this appeared to present possibilities for a settlement that Phoumi could accept. Concerning assurances for Phoumi during the interim period before the integration of Lao forces, the Secretary said that the US could not make specific advance commitments since so much depended on Phoumi's continued good faith, but the US would expect to help him to "hold his own" against the Pathet Lao if he lived up to the integration agreement. The US would also support Phoumi in hard bargaining on the force integration agreement itself, so that the FAR would not be placed at a disadvantage during the process.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1543, 4 Apr 62;  
SecState to Bangkok, 1527, 5 Apr 62.

5 Apr 62

In a policy directive regarding the future of SEATO (circulated to the JCS on 11 April) the State Department noted that the failure of the organization to bring military action to bear in the Lao situation had badly shaken the confidence of Asiatic members (particularly Thailand) in the protection afforded them by the alliance. Although the Rusk-Thanat communique of 6 March had reassured Thailand on this point (see item), the problem was a broader one, reflected in SEATO's lack of success as a political association.

The State Department proposed a number of measures designed to maintain the military alliance as a deterrent to overt Communist aggression, to de-emphasize the nonmilitary aspects, to support a SEATO counter-subversion effort, to expedite decision-making, and to minimize the impediment of SEATO membership to the development of closer relations among the nations of Southeast Asia.

(S) Policy Directive, PD/FE-1, "Future of SEATO," 5 Apr 62; (S) JCS 2339/65, 11 Apr 62; both in JMF 9060/9105 (5 Apr 62).

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5 Apr 62

Met during his layover at the London airport by officials of the Foreign Office and American Embassy, Souvanna appeared dejected and even disgusted over the lack of progress toward formation of a coalition government. He said he had no intention of returning to Laos until assured that Phoumi and Boun Oum were ready to negotiate seriously. Stating that the fate of Laos was now completely in the hands of the Americans, Souvanna said the "Lao people cannot understand" a US policy that on the one hand voiced support for a neutral government of national union and on the other continued to give military support to Phoumi. He spoke of a need for additional American economic and military pressures but avoided a direct answer when asked whether under current circumstances it would be desirable for US advisors to be withdrawn from FAR units. While admitting that zones of control in Laos were not well-defined, Souvanna asserted that Phoumi had moved troops into areas not held prior to the May cease-fire, greatly reinforcing some positions. Hence he saw some justification for Pathet Lao operations against these FAR concentrations. Souvanna declared, however, that his side had no intention of attacking Phoumi's forces in major towns or in areas under FAR control prior to the cease-fire, unless Phoumi attacked first.

Souvanna's remarks regarding Thailand's government leaders were scathing. He referred to Sarit's press statement of 3 April (see item) as a clear indication that the Thai were not to be trusted.

Souvanna made many of the same statements upon his arrival at Paris later in the day. When asked if he intended to visit the United States, he said he had been invited to Washington but would not go before completing the formation of a Lao government of national unity.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 3674, 5 Apr 62; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4711, 5 Apr 62.

5 Apr 62

In a memorandum to the JCS, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, expressed his grave concern over the "probability" of additional Communist military victories in Southeast Asia. The Communists were aggressively infiltrating all of Southeast Asia, CSAF said, and would, with further victories, establish the forward operating bases from which they could continue to attempt domination of the entire area. Echoing earlier JCS views (see item 13 January 1962), CSAF believed that if the Communists came to dominate Southeast Asia, pro-Western governments throughout the Far East would probably collapse. The US, in responding to the threat, was conceiving and executing programs on a country-by-country basis. When compared with one another these programs lacked "concentrated military interrelationship and direction." Elimination or denial of military footholds for the Communists would require quick, concerted action, not only locally, but throughout the Southeast Asia area. For this reason, CSAF considered it imperative that the JCS press for a clear US governmental statement of a

basic strategic objective for Southeast Asia, and an accompanying area-wide program for repulsing the Communists. He presented for JCS consideration a draft memorandum for the Secretary of Defense embodying the above beliefs. The memorandum also contained an assessment of Communist objectives in Southeast Asia, an analysis of the situation in each country in the area, and proposed strategic objectives and programs for the US and the Free World in Southeast Asia.

[Referred to J-5, this paper was still under study there on 15 August 1962, with a suspended deadline.]  
(TS) JCS 2339/64, 10 Apr 62; JMF 9150/9105 (5 Apr 62).

5 Apr 62 CHJUSMAG Thailand reported that Sarit had agreed enthusiastically to a program of follow-on training for certain Thai and US units after the completion of SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 23-28 April 1962).

(Subsequently, US and Thai ground forces conducted two 5-day training exercises in Thailand in the period 30 April-9 May.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 218968, 6 Apr 62;  
(U) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 5 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 19062, 9 May 62.

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Ambassador Brown, who was in Bangkok, provided the Secretary of State with a preliminary assessment of the significance and implications of Phoumi's latest plan for a government headed by the King (see item 3 April 1962). The plan, according to Brown, called for the convening of a National Congress, composed of the National Assembly and King's Council, which would confer full powers on the King and also call upon him to head a new government. The King would then appoint himself Prime Minister of a cabinet in which Souvanna would be Minister of Defense, Boun Oum Minister of Interior, and Souphanouvong Minister of Economy and Planning. Also included in the King's government would be Phoui Sananikone as Foreign Minister, Nhouay Abhay as Minister of Education, and Outhong Souvannavong as Minister of Social Affairs. Phoumi, who would hold no portfolio, was to serve as commander-in-chief of the Lao armed forces. The plan was scheduled to be carried out soon after the opening of 11 May of the annual session of the National Assembly.

Brown considered this proposal a variation of the King-and-councils scheme (see item 9 February 1962), which had been rejected by both Souvanna and Souphanouvong, as well as by the King himself. Phoumi, the Ambassador charged, had offered this new proposal in a "transparent attempt to drive Souvanna out of the picture" by, in effect, invalidating the Prince's mandate to form a new government. Brown acknowledged, however, that the plan was supported by many Lao citizens as offering the best means of ending the political impasse while at the same time preventing the spread of Communism.

Turning to the possible reactions to Phoumi's proposal, the Ambassador expressed doubt that it would be any more acceptable to Souvanna and Souphanouvong than the earlier King-and-councils formula had been. If, however, the King actually did accept a grant of full powers, these two Princes might find it embarrassing to oppose the plan. Under such circumstances, it also was possible that Souvanna might abandon completely his efforts to form a government, while Souphanouvong renewed hostilities. Whatever the reaction of the Princes, Brown was convinced that Communist China, North Viet Nam, and even the USSR would refuse to accept the King's new government as a proper one to sign the Geneva Agreements on behalf of Laos.

In spite of Phoumi's apparent confidence, Brown doubted that the King actually would take an active political role. On the other hand, the possibility that Savang might abandon his "Olympian detachment" could not be dismissed. The recent developments in Laos, along with Harriman's vigorous warnings (see item 24 March 1962), might have convinced him that royal action was vital to the survival of the kingdom.

Should the plan be executed, the result, according to Brown, would be the elimination of Souvanna in defiance of the US and its Western Allies. This direct challenge "could not be allowed to pass without some firm action on our part."

In determining the exact course of action, Brown warned, the US should remember that Phoumi's proposal had several apparently sincere and seemingly worth-while aspects. The procedures, which were consistent with the Lao constitution would entrust power to the King, who would serve even more effectively than Souvanna as a symbol of unity, independence, and tradition. The plan, moreover, would provide representation to the three factions, to their respective leaders, and to the kingdom's leading families -- the Sananikones, Abhays, and Souvannavongs -- and would be balanced between North and South. Adoption of the proposal also would put an end to the much-criticized Boun Oum regime and, "at least ostensibly," reduce Phoumi to a purely military role. Friendly nations of Southeast Asia probably would endorse such a government. Since Souvanna and Souphanouvong had often proclaimed their loyalty to the throne, they might be reluctant to defy the wishes of the King. Finally, this was the type of proposal that, prior to the Geneva Conference, the "US would probably have been most happy to endorse."

It should be recognized, Brown warned, that, even though the US imposed military sanctions and joined in a Western approach to the King and Phoumi, the two men might resist these pressures and succeed in forming the kind of government outlined by Phoumi. Brown therefore recommended that, if it became clear that US pressures were unlikely to achieve the result of "killing this project in its entirety," the US should shift to a policy of trying to shape the scheme along more acceptable lines. If possible, the King's government must be generally regarded as "a way-station," an interim solution along the route to an ultimate coalition government of the type Souvanna had been trying to construct. One possible course



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suggested by Brown was that the King might be induced to give to Phoui Sananikone the mandate to form a government previously held by Souvanna, or perhaps to designate Phoui the Prime Minister of a "caretaker government." In either role, Phoui Sananikone could be charged with negotiating with Souvanna and Souphanouvong toward formation of a provisional government of national unity within the framework of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961).

Replying the following day, Acting Secretary of State Ball thanked Brown for his recommendations and suggested that the US Ambassador explore with the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane and with such Lao leaders as feasible the possibility of shaping Phoumi's plan to conform to the objectives of US policy. The idea of having the King as Prime Minister with a troika of Deputies, Ball observed, might be "negotiable as a face-saver for Phoumi." Ball made no comment on the suggested use of Phoui Sananikone in a major role.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1548, 5 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 875, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown, with the concurrence of CHMAAG Laos, analyzed for Assistant Secretary Harriman the various forms of military sanction against the RLG available to the US if the Thai efforts to change Phoumi's course of action failed. The Ambassador mentioned the following sanctions:

1. Suspension of all deliveries of military supplies from outside Laos. This would be a clear-cut major action in the military field which would be known in a few days to the entire FAR and have a major effect throughout the FAR and on Phoumi, the King, and Sarit. Moreover, it would have no adverse effect on the physical capability of the FAR to fight for about 30 days, giving Phoumi time to reverse his present course. After 30 days, however, this sanction would seriously impair the physical capability of the FAR to fight and would be impossible to reverse if Phoumi remained obdurate. Also, it would be difficult to justify this action in view of continued Soviet aid to the Pathet Lao.

2. Withdrawal of White Star teams from field units. This would be a sanction without widespread adverse military effects, since it would not deprive the FAR of the sinews of war. It was just what Souvanna had asked for and British Ambassador Addis had recommended. However, the withdrawal would have an adverse effect on the fighting capability of the individual FAR units thus deprived, and it would as a practical matter, be irreversible. Moreover, it would have the least impact of any sanction on Phoumi; it would introduce the subject of a general withdrawal of all military advisors; it would deprive the US of its only independent source of knowledge of conditions in certain regions and parts of the FAR.

3. Reduction of air support inside Laos. This would have an immediate impact and would be easily and quickly reversible. For units not fighting it would have no adverse effect on physical military capability, but since almost

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all FAR units were periodically involved some form of action that used up ammunition and hardware, the US would be forced to reach a final decision very quickly whether to reverse itself or let the FAR collapse. In any event, both CHMAAG and the Ambassador emphasized, this action could not be taken until after the withdrawal of White Star teams from the Lao field units because of risks to US personnel.

The Ambassador commented that the withdrawal of White Star teams was probably the most politically practical sanction: it could be described as merely withdrawing military advisors from a government that refused advice. Also it provided the longest period between the US action and the physical impairment of the FAR, and it was favored by Souvanna and some US Allies. However, although it would have some psychological effect as the first military sanction, it would produce the least pressure on Phoumi, who could more easily make good his boast to go it alone without US advice than without US supplies. The suspension of military imports, on the other hand, would exert the maximum immediate psychological pressure on Phoumi, the King, Sarit, and the entire FAR. Although it involved a greater risk, the Ambassador could see no sanction that did not involve some risk. Reduction of air support, however, was judged the most drastic and should be contemplated only as a final measure.

In a later message the same day, the Ambassador made several further comments: reduction of deliveries of military hardware would take time to become noticeable and would have little or no effect; reduction of POL would be noticed and have an effect dependent on the degree of reduction but would be hard to justify; and failure to replace departing MAAG officers would have no effect whatever on Phoumi's course of action.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1550, 1553, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos told CINCPAC that the US Embassy in Vientiane had requested that AID Washington transfer the funds required for a civic action program in the Bolovens Plateau (see items 23 February and 22, 29 March 1962) to the Department of Defense for allotment to MAAG Laos. CHMAAG agreed with this request because: 1) MAAG already had complete operational responsibility for the program, inasmuch as AID Laos personnel could not operate in an insecure area such as the Bolovens Plateau; and therefore 2) allotment of the funds to MAAG would assure clear lines of fiscal accountability for funds expended in the program. (On the following day, CINCPAC informed the JCS that he concurred in the judgments of CHMAAG and the Embassy. (See item 4 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 219001, 6 Apr 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 070233Z Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 In a conversation with Souphanouvong at Khang Khay, British Ambassador Addis proposed that "second-level" contacts among the three Lao factions be renewed at Ban Namone or some similar location. Souphanouvong replied that such meetings would be useless since the political issues "were now so clearly drawn." He also thought that talks of this

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kind would not keep hostilities from flaring up since he expected both sides to keep on mopping up in their own zones. Addis concluded from this reaction that it was useless to press the matter for the present. He replied to Souphanouvong's remark about mopping up with a warning against allowing military action to upset the political situation.

When Addis raised the question of establishing regular visits to Khang Khay by members of the British Embassy staff, Souphanouvong went beyond this by suggesting that the UK set up permanent representation there, either by detaching an officer from the Vientiane Embassy or by establishing a Consulate. Addis made no commitment and later told his Western colleagues in Vientiane that he believed Phoumi would react strongly against any move to establish permanent British representation at Khang Khay, probably by banning all contact by Westerners with the rival "capital." Accordingly he was not disposed to recommend to his government anything beyond the present schedule of informal contacts.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1401, 6 Apr 62; 1404, 7 Apr 62.

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Having previously occupied the high ground east of Nam Tha, the 55th Parachute Battalion advanced about 5 miles against light resistance to a hill approximately 12 miles east of the town by 10 April. A parallel attack launched two days earlier by the 28th and 30th Infantry Battalions had failed to make significant gains, but on 12 April, after the Parachute Battalion had moved forward, the two infantry battalions advanced slightly.

In southern Laos, a probing attack by the enemy on 8 April forced elements of the 43d Volunteer Battalion and 4301st ADC to withdraw from their position, near the Cambodian border, but the position was retaken by counterattack the next day. On the northwestern fringe of the Bolovens Plateau a company-size enemy force attacked FAR positions.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 219488, 9 Apr 62; 100915Z Apr 62; 120945Z Apr 62.

9 Apr 62

In a letter handed to President Kennedy by the Lao Ambassador in Washington, King Savang, after reviewing the history of close cooperation between the US and Laos, observed that this "same understanding, same closeness, and same line of action on the part of the American and Lao Governments" no longer existed. The King then listed several examples of the deteriorating relations between the two nations.

The Lao people, according to King Savang, had come to wonder whether the US did not actually intend to disengage itself from the fight against Communism in Southeast Asia. This suspicion regarding US intentions had been occasioned by American insistence on the formation of a Lao coalition in which the Pathet Lao was represented. To form such a government, the King continued, would involve an alliance with Communism, for the Pathet Lao was a "politico-military creation of the Viet Minh." No alliance between anti-Communists and Communists could possibly work, and nowhere

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else had anti-Communists been asked to collaborate with their enemies. Entry into such an arrangement, the King predicted, would lead to the eventual destruction of Laos.

Another point "confusing to the Lao people and Government" was the insistence that the 14-nation agreement worked out at Geneva could effectively protect the future independence and sovereignty of the kingdom. The Lao people, in assessing the value of such an agreement, could not help but recall that the US had at first advised against participating in an international conference. (Initially, the US had opposed a Soviet proposal for an international conference because of the propaganda debate that would occur in any such forum; see item 20 February 1961. The US, however, soon came to favor a conference; see item 22 March 1961.)

Finally, the King noted that the US, in spite of its avowed desire to protect Lao sovereignty, had suspended aid, thus weakening the RLG in its struggle to preserve the kingdom from Communist domination. Even more damaging to the Lao cause was the cessation of moral support implied by the suspension of cash grants. "Without that support," the King maintained, "the aid would represent mere dollar policy, a policy for profit and the benefit of private interests in no way tied to the high ideal from which it supposedly stems." (For the President's reply, see item 19 April 1962.)

(C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 879, 11 Apr 62; 905, 19 Apr 62.

9 Apr 62 Air photo and visual reconnaissance, reported by USARMA Vientiane, provided evidence of extensive road construction in progress from the Yunnan border toward Phong Saly, with "workers swarming like ants." (For announcement of the Chinese Communist agreement to build such a road, see item 15 January 1962.)

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 221683, 16 Apr 62.

11 Apr 62 Sisouk, the RLG's Acting Foreign Minister, made in a published interview what Ambassador Brown termed "probably the most bitter reproach of US policy made to date by a high-ranking Lao official."

According to Sisouk, Souvanna's departure had little effect on the Lao political situation, although a prolonged absence would "reduce to nil his chances of forming a national union government." Sisouk then charged that Souvanna not only was incapable of forming a coalition but also was no longer able to restrain the Pathet Lao, which was now attacking on all fronts. Thus, the RLG was tempted to interpret Souvanna's departure as a "false excuse for inaction, not to say an implicit renunciation of his mission. Souvanna, moreover, was believed waiting for the Americans, "once his enemies and now his allies and accomplices," to prove their sincerity by exerting extreme pressure on the RLG.

Turning to relations between the RLG and the US Government, Sisouk maintained that the US had suspended its aid in order to force the Lao Government to "accept Washington's political views and, as Harriman declared,

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to show America's sincerity toward Russia and its respect for its international obligations." In short, the RLG was not only being humiliated, it was also being pressed to capitulate without receiving any guarantees in return. The US, Sisouk proclaimed, was placing greater confidence in the trustworthiness of the Communists than in the determination of the RLG to defend Lao independence. If the US, as Souvanna advocated, should withdraw its military support, it would fulfill the wishes of the Chinese and Viet Minh by giving the enemy through diplomacy what Communist military efforts had failed to win. Instead of trying to take advantage of Sino-Soviet differences, the US, so the RLG believed, was sacrificing Laos for a worthless understanding with the Communists.

Sisouk also claimed that Viet Minh troops, in excess of the 10,000-man estimate credited to US observers, were aiding the Pathet Lao in a determined effort to seize the Tchepone-Saravane-Attapeu corridor before the coming of the rainy season. Western and neutral Governments, Sisouk charged, were deliberately minimizing the role of the Viet Minh "in order not to intervene."

(OUO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1417, 11 Apr 62.

11 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Foreign Minister Thanat had reached an understanding with the Malayan Prime Minister for the latter to use his good offices to influence Phoumi to accept the neutralist coalition for Laos when the RLG goodwill mission visited Kuala Lumpur. Thailand had decided to receive the Lao mission and planned to use the occasion to stress to Phoumi the need for flexibility and team work in negotiations for a neutral Laos under a coalition. Answering the Malayan Prime Minister's request for advice, Thanat urged that he too receive the Lao Mission and stress these same ideas. Thanat believed that the RLG would accept the US plan if several other Asian governments all took the same position. He also cautioned the US against taking hasty action or imposing sanctions before diplomatic persuasion could be tried. This could produce "very bad consequences for all concerned."

(On 13 April the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to brief the Malayan Prime Minister on the US position, if possible, when the latter visited Bangkok.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1583, 11 Apr 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1575, 13 Apr 62.

12 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin in Paris informed Souvanna of a message of 11 April in which Harriman first reasserted US support for the formation of a coalition government under Souvanna and then stated the US position regarding its military support of Phoumi. Gavin pointed out that while US financial aid to the RLG had been suspended, the question of withdrawing military assistance to the FAR was complicated by Souphanouvong's aggressive talk about line-straightening operations by the Pathet Lao (see item 31 March 1962) and by the continued presence of significant Viet Minh forces in Laos. Moreover, military sanctions would weaken the "Vientiane non-Communists" on whose strength Souvanna would have to rely when he became Prime Minister.

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Souvanna then made certain remarks. He was content to postpone returning to Laos until US pressure had brought Phoumi to terms. He felt that major difficulties might arise after a coalition government was formed, since Phoumi would be unlikely to accept the loss of power this entailed and might "ferment dissidence even possibly to the point of a coup d'etat." Regarding Thailand, Souvanna was bitterly suspicious, stating that the Thai would never overcome the fear that a prosperous and unified Laos would attract the population of northern Thailand. In regard to King Savang's message to the President (see item 9 April 1962), Souvanna deplored the fact that Phoumi had involved the King. He was aware of the RLG plan to dispatch goodwill missions abroad in search of aid (see item 2 April 1962), but, according to Ambassador Gavin, "did not appear to take the matter seriously."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 5456, 11 Apr 62; Paris to SecState, 4841, 12 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk informed Ambassador Brown of Phoumi's theories regarding the formation of a coalition government. Phoumi, determined not to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister, intended to have the King serve in that office (see items 3 and 5, 6 April 1962). Sisouk, however, had recommended that Phoumi suggest that the King preside over a cabinet based on the Geneva formula of eight neutrals, four rightists, and four leftists (see item 19 January 1962). According to Sisouk's proposal, the three Princes would serve as Vice Prime Ministers under the King. The Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that the matter would be discussed with the King on 15 and 16 April (see item 17 April 1962) and that Phoumi would be willing to allow Souvanna to be Minister of Defense and of Interior in such a government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1422, 13 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that he would meet the King on 15 April and arrange the details for the King's acceptance of the office of Prime Minister in a new government (see item 17 April 1962). There would be no immediate announcement, but, after the National Assembly had convened on 11 May, the Congress would vote full powers to the King. As soon as he had accepted this grant of power, the King would summon the three Princes to confer with him on the composition of the new government. According to Phoumi, Savang had indicated agreement with this course, after Phoumi had advised him that the US was unlikely to change its policy and therefore the King must act.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoui Sananikone expressed to Ambassador Brown his doubts that the King would agree to become Prime Minister, unless both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed to his assuming office. Ambassador Brown then mentioned Phoumi's earlier statement (see item 3 April 1962) that the King would head a new government. Phoui replied that, though the King had at one time been willing to hold office, the firmness shown by Harriman and Sullivan (see items 24 March, 25 March, and 3 April 1962) had "shaken both the King and Phoumi."

Turning to other subjects, Phoui said that he saw no immediate solution to the current impasse. He believed that the RLG's attempt to muster aid from the various Asian

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nations would serve a useful purpose in that it would indicate just how little aid was available. In addition, Phoui considered it possible that the Thai Government, which he believed could be of scant help in bringing about negotiations, might be telling the US one thing and Phoumi another. Finally, Phoui stated that Phoumi was confident that the US would resume its program of aid to the RLG.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin reported on a conversation between Souvanna's representative in Paris, La Norindr, and US officials. La offered as his personal opinion the idea that the sole means of stabilizing the "delicate" situation in Laos was by persuading Souvanna to return there. This could best be done, he continued, by the withdrawal of US military aid from the RLG, plus a concerted Western appeal for Souvanna to return to Laos. While La admitted that his recommendation was not easy to reconcile with Souvanna's desire to remain in Paris, US officials felt that La was "in a good position to make judgments on the possible reactions of his boss."

La also stated that Souvanna had instructed Quinim to make every effort to achieve a "more neutral output in the information field." As a related matter, La mentioned that he had been attempting to interest both Reuters and the French Press Agency in establishing news service facilities in Khang Khay, and he hoped for success with the latter. The Embassy officials took this opportunity to do some "missionary work" regarding US press representation in Laos, but La expressed his regrets that he could do nothing on this score.

La concluded with the suggestion that "in view of Souvanna's respect for Harriman," any important news for the Prince be transmitted as a message from Harriman.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4861, 13 Apr 62.

16 Apr 62 During a royal reception at Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown talked briefly with King Savang. The King declared that the Lao problem arose from a clash between races, a conflict that could not be resolved by the mere establishment of a coalition government. Brown thereupon asked if this was, in effect, a suggestion that Laos be divided along racial lines, with one part of the kingdom going to North Viet Nam and the other part to Thailand. The King, however, "did not seem disposed to pursue the subject further."

Among other things, the King expressed a lack of confidence in both the Geneva Agreements and the alleged Soviet desire for a neutral Laos. He agreed that the three Princes had never engaged in sincere negotiations. Although admittedly aware of his nation's weaknesses, the King declared that the Lao people would never submit to domination by the Annamites or the Communists. He remained unconvinced by Brown's arguments in favor of a Souvanna government. Finally, the King spoke of his past visits to the US and his friendship for the nation that had saved Laos during the 1954 crisis. "After I have lost my throne," he added, "I will come again to Washington."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

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17 Apr 62 At a White House meeting, the President asked the opinion of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, regarding the feasibility of withholding or even terminating military aid to Phoumi. The Chairman replied that such action would be a backward step, and the President seemed inclined to agree. The Chairman also told the President that withdrawal of US advisors, even if only from forward areas, was not a good idea. The President replied that he could see no useful purpose in withdrawing military assistance at present.

(TS) JCS Secy Files, 18 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that the King had definitely agreed to head a coalition government of the type suggested by Sisouk (see item 13 April 1962). This royal decision, however, had not been discussed by the cabinet. The three Princes would serve as Deputy Prime Ministers, and the cabinet would be apportioned according to the Geneva formula of 8-4-4. Phoumi himself might be named Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, although the King seemed to favor his serving as a special adviser with status as Minister without portfolio. Further discussion of this matter with the King was scheduled.

Phoumi also reported that the cabinet had approved goodwill missions (see item 18 March 1962) to Bangkok on 24 April and to Saigon on 4 May. The Chinese Nationalist Government had agreed to receive a mission on a date yet to be arranged, while Korea and Burma had given their tentative approval. Malaya (and possibly the Philippine Commonwealth) had not yet reacted to the Lao diplomatic overtures.

Ambassador Brown commented that the real attitude and intentions of King Savang were still as much a mystery as ever, but the possibility of his taking an active role appeared to be increasing. The Sisouk formula for a King's government, now apparently advocated by Phoumi, was "much more balanced and constructive" than any previous version "and consequently more difficult to oppose."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos reported the results of the first tests in Laos of the CARIBOU aircraft (see item 19 March 1962). Operating into and out of unimproved airfields with as little as 1,000 feet of runway and as high as 5,000 feet elevation, the CARIBOU had proved to be far superior, at least in dry weather, to any other plane yet flown in Laos. CHMAAG recommended two modifications to the aircraft and he requested that it be retained for tests in Laos during the rainy season, until November 1962. (On 27 April, however, the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) detachment in Saigon informed the Department of Defense that the CARIBOU was urgently needed in Saigon for a research and development project. The ARPA unit recommended that, after the completion of this project, the CARIBOU remain in Saigon under ARPA control for use in South Viet Nam, Laos, and Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC et al., DA IN 223009, 17 Apr 62; COMUSMACV to OSD, DA IN 225115, 27 Apr 62.

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18 Apr 62 The Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT) requested by CHMAAG Laos on 8 March (see item) arrived in Laos.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, OSD (ISA), et al., DA IN 228391, 10 May 62.

19 Apr 62 The Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown the text of President Kennedy's reply to King Savang's letter of 9 April (see item). The President expressed his deep regret at the Lao Government's "fundamental misunderstanding" of US policy, reiterated the unchanging friendship of the US for the Lao nation and people, and sought to explain the reasoning behind the current American position.

Because Pathet Lao forces by 1 April 1961 had been gaining the upper hand in their fight against the FAR, the United States, out of friendship for the Lao people, had joined in obtaining a cease-fire designed to preserve the existence of the kingdom and to pave the way for a negotiated settlement which, in turn, would insure the future independence of Laos. Toward this ultimate goal, the US and other friends of Laos had urged both the creation of a neutral coalition led by Prince Souvanna and the implementation of the understandings reached at Geneva, especially of the agreement to withdraw foreign troops from Laos.

Unfortunately, leaders of the RLG had violated the spirit of the various communiques issued by the three Princes (see items 22 June 1961, 6-8 October 1961, and 19 January 1962) and refused to negotiate in good faith toward the establishment of a coalition government. Because of this display of stubbornness, the US Government had lost confidence in the willingness of the RLG to negotiate in good faith and had therefore decided to suspend aid. The US could not provide financial or military support for courses of action contrary to commitments to which the RLG had openly agreed, such as those contained in the various communiques of the Princes. If Phoumi's refusal to negotiate should cause the resumption of hostilities, the President "could hardly justify American military intervention to Congress in the full knowledge that the possibility of a reasonable peaceful settlement had deliberately been forfeited."

President Kennedy then repeated the conviction that a negotiated settlement offered the only possible hope for Laos. A coalition government assisted by the nations of the Free World, protected by the Geneva accords, and supported by all moderate elements within the kingdom could survive the perils of Communism.

American military opinion, the President continued, indicated that the resumption of hostilities would result in the conquest by the Pathet Lao of the entire country. Since the policy of the RLG would, if uncorrected, undoubtedly result in renewed warfare, the interests of the Lao people could best be served by the RLG's abandoning its inflexible position and, while there was still time, entering into sincere negotiations.

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In a separate message, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown, when presenting the President's letter, to "make orally the following points to the King in the language you consider most effective."

Neither the President nor Congressional leaders, the King was to be told, were "prepared to contemplate" the commitment of US troops in Laos. Although the President did not intend at the present time to make a public statement to this effect, he wanted the King to realize that, in spite of any efforts the RLG might make to alter this policy, a military intervention by US forces was out of the question. If he considered it necessary, the President would publicly announce this decision in order to prevent any misunderstanding of US policy.

Ambassador Brown also was to inform the King that the US intended to make every effort within its power to assure a just and equitable implementation of those measures designed to protect the independence and neutrality of Laos. Among these measures were the withdrawal of foreign troops and the proportional integration of the existing armed forces into a national army. The US, moreover, was prepared to support the FAR until integration had been achieved.

The US, the Secretary of State continued, was willing to assist the coalition government, insofar as possible, to conduct free elections. The US also would provide the new government with economic, military, and social assistance in a manner and amount consistent with the Geneva Agreement and agreeable to the US and Lao Governments.

Finally, the King was to be told that President Kennedy and the US Government considered it important that Phoumi take an active and prominent part in the coalition government. Phoumi's forceful leadership and the anti-Communist ideals he represented would be necessary for the success of the new regime. (For the Ambassador's presentation of the above, see item 23 April 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 The State Department issued a decision made at the highest US Government level including instructions for dealing with the current Lao situation. US policy, the decision made clear, continued to be directed toward achieving a "Souvanna solution" and a Geneva settlement for Laos. So far, US efforts had met with some success: the British and French had been reassured and the Communists had refrained from rash military action. The US, therefore, was prepared to mount further prudent pressures on Phoumi. Thai efforts had not worked so far, and Phoumi continued to press for his "King's government" scheme (see items 13 and 17 April 1962) which, if initiated on 11 May, could have the effect of revoking Souvanna's mandate or otherwise driving him from the scene. Therefore, Ambassador Young was instructed to urge the Thai Government to :

1. Persuade the RLG to resume negotiations, renouncing claims to the Defense and Interior posts provided that some acceptable arrangement could be made for troika committees

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in the Souvanna cabinet to regulate these departments and Souphanouvong would give assurances that no military attempts to improve his position would be undertaken during the interim period.

2. Persuade Phoumi not to pursue the "King's government" scheme in any way that would revoke Souvanna's mandate or drive him from Laos. Moreover, the Thai should be informed that the US was prepared to impose unspecified military sanctions on Phoumi by 7 May if Thailand had not succeeded in persuading him by that time to drop his new government scheme planned for implementation on 11 May.

The Department of State would inform the British and French of these highest level decisions, stressing Souphanouvong's refusal to give satisfactory military assurances. The US was also considering the possibility of seeking agreement with the USSR on the levels of military equipment for the respective Lao forces in order to test Soviet intentions and to avoid escalation.

On the same day, Ambassador Young was also instructed to reveal to Sarit the contents of President Kennedy's letter and oral comments to the Lao King (see item 19 April 1962).

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1601, 19 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 In a meeting with Ambassador Young, Prime Minister Sarit admitted that he was having much trouble with Phoumi who was attacking him for his lack of support. Sarit did not look forward to the Lao goodwill mission, and although he would have to receive Boun Oum, he did not know what to say. Ambassador Young urged Sarit to repeat to Boun Oum his "Nong Khai advice" (see item 24 March 1962). Sarit expressed "nebulous negativism" over Phoumi's idea of a King's government for Laos, observing that the King could not make the plan work. Nonetheless, in Young's opinion, Phoumi was coming to Bangkok to sell his plan to the Thai Government. In an attempt to strengthen Sarit's opposition to the scheme, Young pointed out to him that Phoumi's plan would be rejected by Souvanna, who would probably remain in Europe, thus increasing the chances of a military crisis in Laos that would be dangerous to Thailand.

Ambassador Young also reported a conversation he later overheard between Thanat and the Lao Ambassador to Thailand in which Thanat pressed the Lao to advise his government to be realistic and flexible in undertaking real negotiations immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1633, 20 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that, according to the Laos Desk Officer in the French Foreign Office, the current difficulty over the delivery of supplies for French activities at Xieng Khouang would have no immediate effect on the formal aspects of relations between the French and Lao Governments. The conflict had arisen when the RLG interfered with flights that delivered supplies to the six-man French Military Mission at Xieng Khouang, the French school, and the Catholic mission there. When

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questioned by Ambassador Falaize about the RLG's action, Phoumi denied any knowledge of previous flights, even though the RLG had received cargo manifests and had used the flights to transmit messages to Souvanna.

The desk officer declared that France had no intention of withdrawing the Military Mission, which had been authorized by the Geneva Accords and would continue to forward supplies via Phnom Penh. He then emphasized the importance of the French activities at Xieng Khouang, especially of the Catholic mission and the school which together had charge of 120 Lao children who otherwise would be trained in North Viet Nam.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-1973, 19 Apr 62.

19-26  
Apr 62

On 19 April, the White House promulgated National Security Action Memorandum No. 149, authorizing the Secretary of Defense to plan for the withdrawal to the rear echelon in Laos of 7 or 8 White Star Mobile Training Teams (WSMTTs) currently located in forward field positions, but reserving to the Secretary of State the authority to order the actual withdrawal, when he deemed it appropriate but probably not before 7 May. The State Department immediately informed the Vientiane Embassy, and on the following day the JCS informed CINCPAC, CHMAAG Laos, and others of this approved action. The JCS also provided the additional guidance from the State Department that the teams to be withdrawn should be those most exposed and therefore most likely to be overrun or captured by the enemy.

On 23 April, CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC, and Ambassador Brown informed the Department of State, that the teams to be withdrawn would be those at Nam Tha and those stationed with forward units north of Paksane and in the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area. Both men noted that withdrawal of these teams would reduce US capabilities in certain respects. In addition, Ambassador Brown told the State Department that the teams chosen were those located where contact with the enemy was currently most active, and those that were currently most in the public eye. Phoumi would be informed of the withdrawal, the Ambassador reported, only when it was actually in progress.

Finally, on 26 April, in response to concern expressed on the previous day by CINCPAC, CHMAAG reported to his commander that the withdrawal as planned would not "denude" any area of US advisory support. All WSMTTs in the Nam Tha area would be withdrawn, but two MAAG senior advisors and supporting personnel would remain there; the teams near Paksane and Mahaxay-Nhommarath would be withdrawn from forward battalions but would be retained at the respective GM headquarters.

(S) NSAM No. 149, 19 Apr 62, att to JCS 2344/40, 24 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61). (S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 903, 19 Apr 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4160, 20 Apr 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 223817, 23 Apr 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 251844Z Apr 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC DA IN 224675, 26 Apr 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1142, 23 Apr 62.

21-22  
Apr 62

After having launched two attacks against the enemy from the position east of Nam Tha reached on 10 April (see item 8-12 April 1962) and having been repulsed each time, the 55th Parachute Battalion was overrun, along with the supporting 1st Parachute Battalion, by an enemy attack of 3 to 5 battalion strength. Pursued by the enemy, the 55th battalion withdrew to Ban Nam Pick, about 10 miles southeast of Nam Tha, where it joined elements of the 13th Volunteer Battalion. The next day, 22 April, the FAR forces, harassed by enemy small arms and mortar fire, withdrew to Nam Tha. FAR casualties were estimated at 40 to 50 men killed; FAR sources estimated those of the enemy at 400.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 140800Z Apr 62; 150930Z Apr 62; 171000Z Apr 62; 231025Z Apr 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, JCS, OSD, DA IN 225856, 1 May 62.

22 Apr 62 During an informal chat with an officer of the US Embassy in Vientiane, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk declared that, as far as the RLG was concerned, Souvanna was definitely "out of the question" as Prime Minister. The Prince, however, would be accepted as one of three Vice Prime Ministers in a government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). Sisouk believed that the King, before accepting a grant of full powers from the National Assembly, should summon the Princes to Luang Prabang and announce his intentions, so that the Princes would not be presented with a fait accompli. The voting of full powers to the King, Sisouk maintained, would not necessarily mean that Souvanna's mandate had been revoked.

In commenting upon this conversation, Ambassador Brown called attention to an interview, printed on the previous day, in which Sisouk had told the press that the RLG, aware that the US would not change its mind regarding Souvanna, would look to other Asian nations for technical and economic assistance. Sisouk, the Ambassador concluded, shared with many Lao leaders an attitude of "resignation before the inevitable on the one hand and polite defiance of the US on the other."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1443, 23 Apr 62.

22 Apr 62 At a farewell dinner held in his honor in Vientiane, Soviet Ambassador Abramov told the French and British Ambassadors that Laos was "no longer a problem of first importance internationally but had dropped to third or fourth place." Abramov believed that Laos would remain quiet until Souvanna had returned from France. An early settlement, moreover, depended entirely upon the US; there was nothing that the Soviets or British could do.

If an early settlement was reached, Abramov continued, the Soviet Union would be pleased. If, however, the situation "dragged on for two, three, or even seven years without a solution," the Soviet Union was prepared to wait, even though the delay was accompanied by a steady deterioration in Laos. Even in the case of a long delay, Abramov remarked, the Lao problem was not likely to be solved until the Viet Nam crisis, which he ranked in first place internationally, had been resolved. Both Falaize and Addis

gained the impression that Abramov believed a delay might be of greater advantage to the USSR than would an immediate settlement.

Abramov also gave his opinion that Souvanna and Souphanouvong would reject Phoumi's proposal for a new government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). The Soviet Ambassador expressed regret that Brown had been unable to attend the dinner and made only friendly references to the US.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1446, 24 Apr 62.

22 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CHJUSMAG Thailand that Phoumi had "agreed in principle" on 3 April to the extension into Fiscal Year 1963 of the EKARAD program for training FAR units in Thailand. US MAP funds had already been programmed for the training under EKARAD during FY 63 of 2200 troops (the equivalent of three infantry battalions and four artillery batteries), and CHMAAG now intended to urge the FAR to designate specific units for training at specific times. There were currently two artillery batteries and one NCO class in EKARAD training, and CHMAAG had asked the FAR for 200 more NCO's for a May training class. In March, moreover, he had nominated to the FAR four infantry battalions, any one of which could be spared from the front without serious effect upon the combat posture of the FAR. Phoumi replied, however, that none of them could presently be spared, but that he would release one battalion for EKARAD "as soon as the tactical situation permits." CHMAAG felt that, under these circumstances, the training facilities at Lopburi, Thailand, should be retained for the EKARAD program.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 224014, 22 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Young passed on to Sarit and Thanat the US Government's high-level decision concerning Laos and the President's letter and Ambassador Brown's oral comments to the Lao King (see items 19 April 1962). At first Thanat complained that the President's letter and oral statement to the King were vague concerning arrangements for a political settlement of the Lao problem and safeguards against a Communist take-over if the Souvanna government proved ineffective. But Sarit asked that a text or summary of all these documents be given him to use during the anticipated Lao goodwill mission; with these documents, he remarked, he would have more to say to the Laotians than they would to him. He also stated officially for the the US Government that Thailand planned to make no commitments for assistance to the mission. He warned that persuading the RLG to accept the US policy would be a long-term effort and might never succeed. The Lao Government, he commented, seemed to have gone "wild." Moreover, the personal relations between Souvanna and the King formed another formidable obstacle to a solution. He vigorously subscribed to the objective of clearing Laos of all foreign military forces but doubted that the Chinese could be put out, particularly in view of their road and installation building in northeastern Laos (see item 9 April 1962).

The next day, Ambassador Young held a further conversation with the Thai Foreign Minister on the same subject. Thanat promised that he and Sarit would do everything they

could to push the US views during the visit of the Lao goodwill mission. He cautioned, however, against expecting immediate results; of all SEA peoples, the Lao took the longest time to change their minds and understood much less the broader implications and consequences of their problems. Persuading the RLG would be simpler, Thanat believed, if its goodwill mission heard the same arguments from Diem and the South Vietnamese Government as from Thailand and Malaya. He asked if the US had made its position fully known to Diem (see item 28 April 1962). He was somewhat concerned that Diem might take a contradictory line with the RLG.

Thanat also discussed the RLG's attempts to introduce the "King's gambit" as a formula for peaceful settlement. He believed the proposal, while not wholly feasible, at least showed that the RLG was moving out of the corner towards a face-saving compromise. He also felt that neutrals in the Defense and Interior posts would be better than a troika arrangement, but saw either plan a proper subject for discussion and negotiation.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1649, 24 Apr 62;  
1642, 23 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown delivered to King Savang the letter in which President Kennedy explained the reasoning behind US policy toward Laos (see item 19 April 1962). After commenting upon the letter, as instructed by the Secretary of State, Brown also expressed the hope that Souvanna's mandate to form a new government would not be revoked.

After listening to the US Ambassador's remarks, the King expressed appreciation for the President's message and stated that he would study the letter carefully. He also promised to inform the Government of President Kennedy's letter and urge that it be carefully considered, so that the RLG might act wisely and in a manner that would lead to the restoration of US aid.

Ambassador Brown believed that the King, who had seemed more than usually concerned about the loss of US aid and the possible failure of the Princes to reach agreement, would bring the President's letter to the attention of the RLG later in the day. Because of the King's sympathy for Phoumi's position, the Ambassador could not predict how earnestly Savang would urge acceptance of the President's advice. Brown feared, however, that "Phoumi and his colleagues have dug themselves so far into their position that the chances of their modifying it substantially remain slight."

During the audience the King reiterated his desire to rule as a constitutional monarch. Since leaders on both sides were tainted with dishonesty, the King could not avoid contact with corruption if he entered politics. Brown mentioned that "a considerable body of opinion" believed that a government under the King was the only possible solution and indicated that the National Assembly might appeal to the monarch to form a government (see item 17 April 1962). The King merely replied "We will



see." He later added, however, that for the members of the National Assembly to bestow full powers upon him would be an act of "great cowardice" on their part. Although the Ambassador interpreted these remarks to indicate that the King did not desire to become Prime Minister, Brown nevertheless believed that Savang, if called upon by the National Assembly, might possibly agree to head a new government.

The King also expressed concern lest the rivalry of the Princes result in the partition of the kingdom. The antidote, the King continued, would be a government of national union, probably led by Souvanna. Such a coalition would have to be composed of the nation's elite, but thus far both Boun Oum and Souvanna had simply presented lists of nonentities culled from among their followers. Not even the King himself could make a cabinet composed of "hacks" work successfully. The tragedy of Laos, the King complained, was that it had so few competent men and that these few would not cooperate.

Another point mentioned by the King was his belief that Communist China would never abandon its imperialistic designs and would continue to support wars of "liberation." Hence Laos would always be under attack.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1444, 23 Apr 62.

23-28  
Apr 62

SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA, sponsored by Thailand and the United States with participation of Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, was conducted in Thailand. On 28 April CINCPAC reported the "simulated enemy in full retreat" as the result of successful tactical air operations. The approved publicity guidance for the exercise had stated that its objectives were to develop coordination in the use of SEATO air power through an air operations center, demonstrate the feasibility of rapid aerial resupply of ground forces, exercise SEATO capability to conduct behind-the-lines guerrilla warfare, and standardize operational procedures between participating SEATO forces.

(C) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1513, 30 Mar 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 250415Z and 282155Z Apr 62; (U) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 051955Z May 62.

25 Apr 62 An RLG goodwill mission, intended to gain support for the Boun Oum government from certain Asian nations, left Vientiane for Bangkok. Included in the party were Boun Oum, Phoumi, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, and officials of the Ministries of National Economy, Public Works, and Finance. Sisouk, in an informal conversation with reporters, said that Boun Oum and the majority of the group would return to Vientiane after visiting Bangkok. Phoumi and Sisouk, however, were to proceed to Seoul, Saigon, and Kuala Lumpur. The visit to Seoul was tentatively scheduled for 2-4 May and the mission to Malaya for 8-9 May. An exact date for the Saigon visit had not yet been fixed. Sisouk did not indicate whether he and Phoumi would return to Vientiane before journeying to South Korea.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1448, 25 Apr 62.

27 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that by public statements and long private talks during the Lao goodwill mission's visit to Thailand, Sarit and Thanat apparently had influenced Phoumi and others "to change in a satisfactory direction." Thanat had informed Young that the matter now looked very hopeful, and although the May deadline set by the US (see item 19 April 1962) had an impact on the Lao officials, the problem of face, both in Vientiane and Bangkok, was real, and ways must be found to adjust "public opinion." Therefore, he hoped the US would not undertake military sanctions on the 7 May date. He understood the US desire for valid and adequate assurances of the Lao change of opinion and was confident that these would be given in early May.  
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1666, 27 Apr 62.

27 Apr 62 As reinforcement for the defenses at Nam Tha, now pushed back to the immediate vicinity of the town and airfield, the first elements of the 11th Parachute Battalion were brought in from southern Laos. [During the next several days, the FAR continued to parachute elements of the 11th Battalion into the area, raising the total strength to eight battalions with approximately 4,500 men. Enemy forces, estimated at five to six battalions, were believed to number 2,500 infantry and support troops. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire was exchanged almost daily. On 27 April and again on 30 April the FAR garrison repulsed enemy attacks by forces ranging up to company size. Then on 5-6 May the enemy launched a full-scale assault by at least four battalions. Attacking from three sides of the town, the enemy entered Nam Tha on 6 May.]

In central and southern Laos, patrol activity and probing attacks continued to be the pattern of action. A redeployment of FAR units, necessitated by the move of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, took place in the neighborhood of Savannakhet.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to AIG 923, JCS. et al., DA IN 225019, 25 Apr 62; DA IN 224774, 26 Apr 62; DA IN 225070, 27 Apr 62; DA IN 225384, 28 Apr 62; DA IN 225842, 21 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP 18-62, 2 May 62.

27 Apr 62 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC reiterated his belief (see item 15 March 1962) that, if MAAG Laos was withdrawn but US military assistance to Laos continued, an organization similar to the former PEO Laos should be established within the US Country Team. The PEO had come into bad repute during its existence, CINCPAC commented, because it was inadequately and improperly manned; once it had been properly manned with military personnel, it had done a "respectable" job. CINCPAC recommended that military personnel be selected for placement within USOM Laos during the next few months and that a chief of a PEO-type organization, and his immediate staff, be designated so that the US would be prepared to continue supervising military assistance programs when and if MAAG Laos was withdrawn.  
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270224Z Apr 62.

28 Apr 62 Referring to the goodwill mission the RLG was sending to various capitals in the Far East in order to gain moral



support for RLG resistance to a negotiated settlement and probably to request financial assistance as well, the Secretary of State told the US Embassies in seven Far Eastern countries there were indications that Phoumi and his group would be strongly influenced by the reception they received on their trip. The Thai Government, which was already cooperating fully with the US, believed that if other friendly Asian governments would support a peaceful settlement for Laos, Phoumi would change to a more realistic policy. On the other hand, if the RLG were to receive encouragement it might continue in its present dangerous course. Secretary Rusk instructed the Far Eastern Embassies to impress upon the governments concerned the importance the US attached to their support of a negotiated settlement of the Laotian problem. If necessary, US diplomats should point out that the US felt it had the right to expect "not passive acceptance but active support" of US policy from its Asian friends and allies. This would be particularly true, Rusk noted, of leaders of those countries that the US was "almost unilaterally keeping alive, e.g., Diem, Chiang, Pak."

The Secretary outlined several general points that might be used in the briefings and spelled out specific instructions for Ambassadors Nolting in Saigon and Stevenson in Manila. The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam was instructed to see President Diem and "insist that he support fully" the US policy in Laos. This policy was shared by other friends of SVN who were also lending assistance to Diem in his own struggle. Diem should understand, said Rusk, that the most effective way of curtailing Viet Cong use of the Lao corridor would be through implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and a coalition government would be necessary to put these into effect. It would be, therefore, to Diem's advantage to urge Phoumi to negotiate for coalition; a continuation of the present course in Laos would only worsen the situation for both the RLG and South Viet Nam.

Ambassador Stevenson in Manila was told to emphasize that a policy of peaceful settlement for Laos was not that of the US alone but was supported by all other Free World friends of Laos, including Thailand. The Secretary of State suggested to Stevenson that it might be useful to stress that the US, far from "writing Laos off," intended to give the non-Communists in a neutral Lao government strong political and economic assistance against the Communists.

(S) Msg, SecState CIRC 1850, 28 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown called upon Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, who appeared genuinely concerned about the rift between the RLG and the US Government. While Sisouk stressed his nation's need for US support, Brown warned that, unless Phoumi abandoned his plan to have the King form a new government (see item 17 April 1961), the US would take further action against the RLG. Sisouk, however, objected that the application of additional pressure would merely cause Phoumi "to dig in his heels."

Brown opened the conversation by asking Sisouk's views of prospects for the future. The Acting Foreign Minister replied that, although neither the military nor economic situations were good, he was slightly more optimistic. He based this optimism on his belief that the RLG, having realized the need for US aid and friendship, would shape a policy designed to maintain the best possible relations with the US. He did not believe that the RLG would do anything to worsen these relations.

Sisouk then stated that the mission to Bangkok (see items 25 and 27 April 1962) had been well received by the Thai Government. Sarit, however, had urged the RLG to be prudent, to regard carefully its relations with the US, and to give serious consideration to US advice. Most of the discussion had been devoted to military and economic matters. Such questions as the possible establishment of a troika for Defense and Interior had not been investigated.

Brown then declared that he had been discouraged by certain remarks attributed to Sisouk and Phoumi. According to the press, the Acting Foreign Minister had declared after the meeting with Sarit that Souvanna could not be relied upon to form a government. In addition, Phoumi had been quoted as insisting, on this same occasion, that he retain control of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Sisouk replied that statements such as these were essential, for the delegation could not suddenly change its views without appearing to bow to the dictates of a foreign power. If the RLG did alter its stand, the change would not occur until the delegation had completed its entire tour of Asian nations. In that way, the RLG would maintain its prestige, since no one nation could be singled out as having forced this alteration of policy.

Sisouk then remarked that Souvanna should return to Laos and resume negotiations. Brown answered that the Prince would not return unless the RLG was willing to discuss Defense and Interior. When Sisouk asked what assurances Souvanna would give about, for example, the army, Brown said that, since the RLG was concerned about this subject, it was up to Phoumi and his colleagues to state exactly what guarantees they desired. The RLG, Brown continued, should be discussing the basis upon which it would negotiate concerning Defense and Interior. Once the conditions had been formulated, the RLG should be prepared to enter into sincere discussions regarding these key cabinet posts. The Ambassador, after observing that the US was willing to support the RLG in obtaining reasonable assurances on principal issues, suggested that Sisouk and his fellow cabinet officers concentrate on the suggested troika arrangement in Defense and Interior (see item 31 March 1962). The US had already mentioned this possible solution to Souvanna, who had indicated a willingness to accept it, and to Souphanouvong, who at least had not specifically rejected it.

Sisouk, after listening to Brown's arguments, maintained that the RLG could not, in advance of negotiations, make any public statement of the conditions under which it would yield Defense and Interior. The US Ambassador replied

that no public statement was necessary. All that was required was a reasonable assurance to Souvanna that the RLG would engage in serious negotiations regarding these posts.

Ambassador Brown then asked Sisouk if Phoumi intended to have the National Assembly, when it convened on 11 May, empower the King to form a new government. Sisouk explained that, since Phoumi would return to Vientiane from Malaya on 10 May and depart by the 14th for Taiwan and possibly the Philippines, it did not appear that there would be time for any major action during so brief a stay in the Lao capital. Brown nevertheless warned that the Western powers opposed the scheme as impractical. Not only would Souphanouvong and Souvanna reject such a plan; its unilateral implementation by the RLG would, in effect, revoke Souvanna's mandate, thus eliminating his moderating influence and leaving the right and left in direct confrontation. Sisouk, when asked by Brown, declined to give categorical assurance that, at least during May, no grant of powers would be voted to the King. The Acting Foreign Minister suggested that Brown seek confirmation from Phoumi that the King would not form a new government during the month of May.

In conclusion, Sisouk asked that the US, instead of bludgeoning the RLG into compliance, offer some means by which the Lao Government could save face. Brown replied that the US had for a long time relied on friendly advice and persuasion to convince the RLG to accept a coalition government led by Souvanna. These means, however, had proved useless. If the RLG, at some earlier time, had asked for a way of honorably abandoning its opposition to Souvanna, the US would have cooperated, but the RLG instead had grown increasingly rigid in its stand against the Prince. Since this was the case, the US had naturally grown correspondingly less gentle in its dealings with the Lao Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1462, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 During an interview with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi suggested a "basket solution" which included: 1) certain international commitments, such as those contained in the Geneva Agreements; and, in particular, an undertaking by the US to support vigorously the execution of these agreements; 2) agreement with Souvanna on the formation of a coalition government, along with special arrangements to govern Defense and Interior and assurances regarding the measures by which Souvanna would protect Laos from Communist domination; and 3) a private arrangement with the US "as to what would happen if things went badly under a Souvanna government." This solution, Phoumi believed, would eliminate the misunderstanding between the Lao and US Governments.

In commenting upon the first point in the proposed settlement, Brown assured Phoumi that the US, since it was eager to see the adoption of the Geneva Agreements, would play its full role in making the agreements work as effectively as possible. The conversation then turned to the second point, as Phoumi and Brown engaged in a long discussion of how to renew contact with Souvanna, of the assurances that Souvanna and the US could extend to the RLG, and of the possible revocation of the Prince's mandate.

Brown recommended that Souvanna be told that the RLG wished to enter into serious discussions concerning the surrender to the neutral group of the Defense and Interior portfolios. Phoumi, after acknowledging that Souvanna's mandate remained valid in spite of his withdrawal to Paris, declared that the RLG wished to correct the misunderstanding that had alienated Souvanna. Phoumi then asked if the US, because of the insecurity of Lao codes, would transmit a message to the Prince. The message, however, would have to be delivered in a fashion that would not imply "retreat" by Phoumi. Brown agreed to transmit the message in the manner that would cause Phoumi the least embarrassment.

Regarding the assurances sought by the RLG, Brown asked Phoumi to explain the type of guarantees he desired. The US probably would agree with many of these conditions and consequently would support him in asking Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept them.

Ambassador Brown then declared that the US objective in Laos was to shift the fight against Communism from the military to the political, psychological, and economic fields. After Phoumi had expressed agreement with this objective, Brown noted that the anti-Communists possessed several advantages in these three areas. Listed as advantages were: 1) Phoumi's energy, knowledge of the situation, and ability, as a member of the coalition, to deal with Souvanna; 2) the basic dislike of most Lao for the Pathet Lao; 3) acceleration of the civil action and rural development programs; and 4) the "economic resources which could be put into the electoral battle."

The election of a government to succeed the coalition, Brown continued, was the key to the future of Laos. Souvanna, after all, had declared that the Pathet Lao had to be defeated in these elections if the kingdom was to be saved from Communism. Because of the importance of the electoral campaign, Phoumi could rest assured that the US would render financial, technical, and material support to the anti-Communist forces.

The US Ambassador then turned to Phoumi's proposal that the King form a new government. The US, France, and Britain were concerned about the plan, since the King's acceptance of office would automatically revoke Souvanna's mandate. This, in turn, would result in a direct confrontation between the RLG and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi, when asked if he intended to implement the plan as scheduled, remarked that he might have been misunderstood. The King, after all, could take advantage of a grant of powers to appoint Souvanna as Prime Minister. At any rate, nothing could be done for the next few weeks, since the proposal had not even been discussed with members of the National Assembly.

Brown then reminded Phoumi of the numerous public and private statements to the effect that a Government headed by the King was the only solution. (For examples of such statements, see items 3 and 13 and 17 April 1962.) The Western Powers had accepted these statements at face value

and therefore viewed the situation with grave concern. Unless reassured on this point, the US and its allies might be compelled to "take some further action which might aggravate the situation." At Brown's insistence, Phoumi then declared that the RLG, at least during the month of May, would not discuss with the National Assembly either the granting of full powers to the King or the King's forming a new government.

After discussing these various aspects of the formation of a coalition government, the two men turned to the third point, a private arrangement between the US and Phoumi that would take effect if Souvanna failed. Brown merely said that he would be interested to learn the precise arrangement that Phoumi had in mind. Phoumi then expressed a wish to visit the US once again. Instead of explaining the RLG position, however, he would explore the kind of arrangements that could be made with the US to give maximum assurance that, if the RLG did yield Defense and Interior to the neutrals and participate in the coalition, the country would not slip into Communism. Phoumi believed that any private arrangement with the US should be kept secret, but, if the US insisted that any other party in Laos should be informed, he would agree to "let him in on the secret."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1460, 30 Apr 62; 1461, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62

Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk handed Ambassador Brown a message for delivery to the Lao Embassy in Paris, under the arrangement made by Phoumi with the Ambassador earlier in the day (see item). Sisouk requested that the US also approach Souvanna along the lines set forth in the message. He asked that these parallel approaches be kept completely confidential, since the other members of the RLG cabinet were not aware that overtures to Souvanna were under way. Souvanna, moreover, should not be told that the US Government knew of Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris. Brown agreed to deliver the message and recommended to the Secretary of State that Ambassador Gavin be instructed to approach Souvanna.

Sisouk, in the message destined for Paris, directed the Lao Ambassador there to get in touch secretly with Souvanna in order to ascertain: 1) the Prince's personal views regarding the present political impasse; 2) the possibility of a peaceful settlement on the basis of previous communiques issued by the three Princes; 3) the date of Souvanna's return to Laos; and 4) any assurances that Souvanna could offer in return for RLG concessions regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The Lao Ambassador was to stress the extreme importance to the RLG of assurances by Souvanna that he could prevent the Communist domination of the kingdom. Ambassador Brown, however, considered this demand that Souvanna repeat his pledge not to yield to the Communists to be an attempt by the RLG to save face while abandoning its previous opposition to the Prince.

The parallel US approach, as outlined by Ambassador Brown, would begin with a statement that Phoumi had

indicated privately that the RLG was willing to negotiate on all aspects of a coalition government, including the Defense and Interior Ministries. These negotiations would be conducted in the spirit of the various communiqués previously issued by the Princes.

The US approach also would indicate the RLG's concern about the possible consequences to the FAR and to the country if Souvanna were given both the Defense and Interior portfolios. For that reason, the RLG desired certain assurances from Souvanna. The Government sought, for example, a guarantee that, prior to agreement on their integration, the existing armed forces would remain intact and in place. It also sought an arrangement whereby the Minister of Defense or Interior could make no decision without the unanimous consent of the three factions. In addition, the RLG desired renewed assurance from Souvanna that he would not permit himself to be dominated by the Communists.

Upon receipt of the above in Washington, the Acting Secretary of State immediately instructed Ambassador Gavin to deliver Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris and to make the requested parallel US approach to Souvanna. Gavin should coordinate these actions with the French Foreign Office and keep in mind the primary objective of bringing about a favorable exchange between Phoumi and Souvanna. (See item 2 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1463, 1464, 30 Apr 62; SecState to Paris, 5787, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62

In instructions to Ambassador Brown, the Acting Secretary of State expressed concern over the deployment of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha (see item 27 April 1962). He suspected that this move meant the FAR was preparing for offensive action to expand the perimeter there, since the State Department's information was that "FAR forces already heavily outnumber the enemy at Nam Tha and are adequate to maintain defensive positions." Unless the Ambassador found that the 11th Parachute Battalion was actually being used for replacement rather than reinforcement at Nam Tha, he was to tell Phoumi that the US strongly opposed the redeployment as an unwise utilization of troops badly needed elsewhere and as a "provocation which could possibly result in a FAR military set-back." (See item 1 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 926, 30 Apr 62.

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS

SIXTH INSTALLMENT:

1 MAY 1962 TO 31 JULY 1962

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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,  
SIXTH INSTALLMENT: 1 MAY 1962 TO 31 JULY 1962

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(Note: Parenthetical references in text refer to items by date only, not by item number. Thus a reference to item 29, 31 May indicates an item of date 29, 31 May.)

MAYSummary of Major Subjects

1. During May, and particularly after the Communist attack on Nam Tha in the early part of the month, the US intensified its diplomatic efforts to achieve a free, neutral, and independent Laos by exerting pressures on the three Princes to negotiate for the formation of a coalition government. The US brought further pressures to bear on Lao political figures through British, French, and Thai diplomats.

a. US diplomatic actions.

Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18, 26-28, 30, 31, 33-35, 39, 44, 46-50, 52-55, 61, 63, 67, 68, 71-73, 78-80, 95, 96.

b. British and French diplomatic actions.

Nos. 2, 7, 35, 52, 63, 67, 68, 77, 96, 97.

c. Thai diplomatic actions.

Nos. 2, 5, 27, 30, 47, 64, 80.

2. In the first week of May PL/Viet Minh forces attacked FAR forces at Nam Tha, and inflicted a decisive defeat on the FAR. American and Allied efforts to re-establish the cease-fire proved fruitless, as did the attempts to secure Soviet intervention to bring about PL withdrawal from the Nam Tha area.

a. Nam Tha attack.

Nos. 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 30-33, 36, 39, 46, 50, 64, 69, 75, 79, 82, 94.

b. US and Allied efforts to re-establish the cease-fire.

Nos. 14, 20, 27, 30, 33, 34, 38, 47, 49, 54, 55, 61, 69, 75, 77, 92, 94, 97.

c. Negotiations with the Soviets to achieve PL withdrawal.

Nos. 14, 17, 30, 61, 92, 97.

3. The debacle

3. The debacle of Nam Tha raised the question of a partitioned Laos and the possibility of additional wide scale PL/Viet Minh attacks in Laos. Even more serious, however, was the danger that Thailand and other Southeast Asia countries might also fall under Communist control. This threat led the US to deploy troops to Thailand and the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam. At the same time the US reviewed SEATO Plan 5 and found it adequate to cope with the situation; the US also asked the SEATO nations to join it in deploying military contingents to Thailand, and several did.

a. Partition of Laos and further PL/Viet Minh attacks.

Nos. 3, 24, 26, 30, 36, 40, 46, 47, 51, 52, 60, 64, 75, 76, 78, 82, 91, 92, 94, 96, 97, 99.

b. US military actions concerning Laos.

Nos. 7, 11, 21, 28-30, 36, 37, 39, 42, 46, 48, 51, 57, 58, 66, 75, 80-82, 85-88, 91, 94.

c. US actions in Thailand.

Nos. 15, 21, 29, 45-49, 52, 55, 59, 61, 64, 65, 70, 74, 77-79, 83-87, 90.

d. Defense of Thailand.

Nos. 23, 30, 45, 47, 55, 56, 59, 84, 87, 94.

e. SEATO.

Nos. 30, 34, 37, 47, 49, 52, 55, 59.

4. After the fall of Nam Tha, the US made every effort to keep the Nam Tha issue out of the UN, and to arrange for ICC investigation of the incident. At the same time the US prodded the RLG to regain as much of the territory lost as possible, but to no avail. Also, the US considered military and economic sanctions against the RLG, and planned a reorganization of the RLG and the removal of Phoumi from the political scene.

a. Nam Tha incident (UN and ICC).

Nos. 14, 18, 30, 31, 34, 54, 69, 95, 98.

b. Recovery

b. Recovery of lost territory.

Nos. 42, 46, 51, 69, 75, 82, 91, 94, 95.

c. US military and economic sanctions.

Nos. 2, 5, 10, 12, 27, 28, 30, 31, 44, 48, 53, 57,  
58, 80.

d. Reorganization of the RLG and removal of Phoumi from  
political scene.

Nos. 22, 28, 30, 39, 44, 48, 52, 53, 63, 64, 67, 68,  
78, 80, 96.

5. Throughout the month Souvanna attempted to achieve a peaceful solution to the Laotian crisis based primarily on RLG acceptance of his Troika proposals. In this same period the RLG's "goodwill" missions failed to achieve any substantial support for Phoumi, and this failure helped make the RLG more amenable to the Troika proposals.

a. Souvanna's Troika proposals.

Nos. 4, 5, 18, 27, 31, 35, 60, 89, 93.

b. Good-will missions.

Nos. 1, 2, 9, 31, 43, 62, 93.

The US

1 May 62     The US Embassy at Seoul advised the Government of South Korea, in connection with the Phoumi-No. 1 Boun Oum visit, that the US had the right to expect its Asian allies, including the ROK, to support American policy toward Laos. The Government of the ROK replied that it would not take any action which might be "embarrassing" to the US.

In a later discussion the Korean Foreign Minister told the US Ambassador that the Korean Government would publicly adopt a noncommittal position in handling the Laotian good will mission, but that privately Korean officials would urge Phoumi and his group to accept the US policy of a negotiated settlement.

(Following Phoumi's departure, the Korean Foreign Minister told the US Ambassador that the Republic of Korea had rejected Phoumi's request for technical assistance and military goods.)

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62.     (S) Msg, Seoul to SecState, 1139, 2 May  
62.     (C) Msg, Seoul to SecState, 1153, 5 May  
62.

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1 May 62     Ambassador Brown recommended that the US not initiate military sanctions against Phoumi  
No. 2     on 7 May (see item 19 April 1962), since he believed chances of sincere negotiations would be improved if the US followed Thai advice and exercised patience, postponing sanctions at least until the end of the month. He based his recommendation on the following reasoning:

reasoning: the US 7 May deadline for the imposition of military sanctions was contingent upon Phoumi's implementation of his King's government scheme by 11 May. Phoumi, however, had categorically assured Brown that no such action would be taken prior to the end of May. Since Thai leaders had reported definite progress in their attempts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate, imposition of sanctions on 7 May might undo all their efforts. Ambassador Brown was also convinced that the element of "saving face" was an important one in dealing with Phoumi and must constantly be borne in mind, along with the RLG's legitimate concern over receiving appropriate assurance from Souvanna concerning the latter's policies and intentions in the new government.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the suspension of US financial aid was beginning to make itself increasingly felt. Sisouk admitted that it was becoming more apparent to Phoumi that the RLG could not survive without US financial assistance. Moreover, US moral and political pressures were driving home to Phoumi a sense of isolation. This feeling should increase as the Lao goodwill missions continued to be unproductive. Of less importance but still worth noting, the Ambassador believed, was the disposition on the part of certain deputies in the National Assembly to take some kind of initiative in the coming session to redress the situation and restore good relations with the US.

Brown

Brown warned that the French and British Ambassadors would undoubtedly present contrary recommendations to their governments. They saw Phoumi's overtures to Souvanna as tactical measures designed to avoid the imposition of military sanctions by 7 May and, perhaps, as an attempt to place responsibility for any further delays on Souvanna. Neither Ambassador believed that further pressure on Phoumi was likely to stiffen his position and stop any incipient cooperation on his part. The British Ambassador continued to believe that the military respite granted by Souphanouvong was contingent upon the imposition of military sanctions by the US and that the Soviet acquiescence in delay was based on the same premise. Ambassador Brown was not sure that such a thesis could be supported. There was no evidence that the Communists were interested in the US sanctions against Phoumi, let alone that they were preparing for a large-scale offensive. In fact, it was possible that Phoumi, upon realizing his situation, might be willing to work toward a Souvanna solution if he could get adequate safeguards, and sufficiently "save face" at the same time.

(The President decided on 2 May that in view of Ambassador Brown's recommendations, military sanctions would not be imposed on Phoumi.)

Ambassador

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1470,  
1 May 62, JCS to CINCPAC, 4338, 3 May 62.

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1 May 62      Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary  
of State that, contrary to US military advice,  
No. 3      Phoumi had reinforced Nam Tha (see item 30  
April 1962). Phoumi, who had insisted that  
politically he could not afford to lose the  
area, apparently believed that his troops there  
were faced with superior enemy force totaling  
about 11 battalions. The US mission admitted  
that a substantial number of well-trained  
North Vietnamese troops threatened Nam Tha  
but discounted Phoumi's estimates.

Later that day the Department of State  
expressed its concern to Ambassador Brown  
over Phoumi's repeated rejection of US  
military advice. Moreover, the Department  
was not convinced that Phoumi's motives  
were primarily directed toward holding Nam  
Tha but suspected that he hoped to provoke  
Communist action which in turn would provide  
another pretext for avoiding negotiations  
or involving the US. Ambassador Brown was  
requested to submit a list of cases in which  
Phoumi disregarded or acted contrary to US  
military advice since the cease-fire of  
May, 1961. The Department also wanted to  
know how many FAR battalions should be  
stationed at Nam Tha.

(On 4 May, Ambassador Brown reported  
that no record had been kept of Phoumi's  
rejections



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rejections of US military advice but listed as the most notable examples Phoumi's refusal to accept the repeated US advice against committing additional forces to Nam Tha and his insistence on maintaining larger troop forces than the US deemed wise. Basically the problem was a "major difference of psychology" between Phoumi and MAAG Laos; Phoumi stressed the size of his forces as the key to combat effectiveness of the FAR, and the MAAG stressed training and leadership. Ambassador Brown also observed that an estimate of FAR force levels appropriate to the Nam Tha area depended on the concept of the mission, a source of disagreement between Phoumi and the US. In light of their understanding of the situation, however, the US military believed "three good battalions" were probably all that should be committed.)

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1467, 1 May 62, 1485, 4 May 62; SecState to Vientiane, 932, 1 May 62.

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1-4  
May 62

No. 4

The US Minister to France reported that Souvanna, in response to Phoumi's offer to resume tripartite negotiations, had refused to return to Laos until the Prince's colleagues in Khang Khay, among them KhamSouk, had reported that the RLG proposals were acceptable. The Department of State replied that since Phoumi was not likely to deal with KhamSouk, who was believed to be under

Pathet

Pathet Lao influence, the US Minister should impress upon Souvanna that the resumption of negotiations depended upon the Prince's personal response to Phoumi's offer. On 3 May, the Minister conveyed this message to Souvanna, who replied to the RLG proposal on the following day.

Souvanna's reply called for the formation of a coalition government in which the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs would be controlled by the neutrals. One technical and one political Ministry, however, would be given to both the Pathet Lao and to Phoumi's right-wing followers. Souvanna also said that if the RLG accepted this arrangement, he would renew his proposal that each of the key Ministries have three Secretaries of State so that the Left, the Right, and the Neutrals would have a voice in all major decisions. Finally, Souvanna pledged that he would do everything possible to prevent Laos from becoming a Communist state.

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(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 5129, 1 May 62; 5138, 2 May 62; 5195, 4 May 62; 5179, 4 May 62; 5269, 9 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 5811, 1 May 62.

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1-4  
May 62

No. 5

Sarit informed Ambassador Young that he had reached an understanding with Boun Oum and Phoumi by which the RLG would accept Souvanna as Premier of a coalition in which the

troika

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troika principle was applied only to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. In return, Souvanna, who had not yet been consulted, was to agree to a cabinet composed of four members of the Pathet Lao, four of the RLG, and an eight-man center group, half of which would be chosen from among Souvanna's followers. Souvanna also would be called upon to give assurances that he would not allow the Communists to take control of Laos.

In the meantime, the US should assign a special representative to assist the RLG both in the preliminary diplomatic maneuvering and in the subsequent negotiations. The US, in addition, was to help persuade Souvanna to return from Paris and to resume cash grants as soon as Phoumi and Souvanna had reached a firm agreement. The Thai Prime Minister also believed that the US Government should offer Phoumi certain assurances against the possibility that Souvanna might fail to execute his part of the bargain.

On 2 May, Under Secretary Ball, having accepted Young's recommendations, authorized the Ambassador to express the President's appreciation for Sarit's efforts. Turning to the details of the agreement, Ball pointed out that any assurances by Souvanna should be obtained through negotiations and not be made a condition for the RLG's surrender of the Defense and Interior portfolios.

portfolios. The Under Secretary also asked for a clarification of the type of assurances advocated by Sarit. He added, however, that he could see no advantage in assigning, at this time, a representative to assist the RLG negotiators. Finally, the Under Secretary advised that the threat to invoke military sanctions after 7 May would be held in abeyance for the time being (see item 1 May 1962).

Ambassador Young on 3 May found Thanat in "one of his fractious moods," when the US diplomat asked for the additional information sought by Under Secretary Ball. The Thai Foreign Minister suggested that the US assure the RLG that it would "'step in'" if Souvanna should yield to Communist pressure. This American action, Thanat observed, might consist of "military, economic, and vigorous diplomatic support." After criticizing the activities of Western Ambassadors in influencing RLG policy, Thanat warned that Thailand would not "automatically sign" a Geneva Agreement.

In a message dated 4 May, Under Secretary Ball advised Young that US financial aid could not be resumed until Phoumi had proved his good faith. Although the US would provide both diplomatic and economic support to a Lao coalition, the President could not give the Thai Government a "blank check on military intervention."

Young

Young, moreover, was instructed that Phoumi's new approach to Souvanna, together with his abandonment of the King's government scheme, had justified the continuation of military aid to the FAR. Yet, because the threat of military sanctions had spurred Phoumi to action, Young was to go no farther than to indicate that these sanctions were being held in abeyance. Finally, Ball suggested that the Ambassador, for the present, avoid discussing the Geneva Agreements with Thanat.

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1691, 1 May 62, 1701, 3 May 62. (S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1687, 2 May 62; PRIORITY 1700, 4 May 62.

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2 May 62 At a briefing on both Laos and Viet Nam, the President made no major decisions relating to the Laotian crisis. He did, however, express a desire to see all Department of State cables being drafted to advise Ambassadors Brown and Young on the current negotiations in Laos.

No. 6

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(S) JCS 2343/120, 19 Jun 62; JMF 5410 (3 May 62).

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2 May 62 [REDACTED] the expansion of the Kha ADC units (see item 6 March 1962) was progressing at a rapid rate, and that 10 of the authorized 12 companies had already been recruited. [REDACTED] All 12 units would be operational by 30 June.

No. 7

The

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3 May 62 The FAR reported the capture of Muong Sing by a two Chinese Communist battalion force.

No. 8 According to the FAR, the Chinese force had turned the town over to a PL battalion and then returned to Yunnan. CHMAAG verified the capture of Muong Sing on the following day; but he noted the FAR charge of Chinese Communist participation had not yet been proved (see item 12 May 1962).

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, DA IN 226430, 3 May 62 DA IN 227094, 5 May 62.

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4 May 62 Acting upon Secretary Rusk's 28 April instructions (see item), Ambassador Nolting

No. 9 approached President Diem concerning the impending visit to South Viet Nam by Boun Oum and Phoumi. On the whole, Diem's attitude

was

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was "realistic but sorrowful." He said that, although he had neither the means nor the desire to change US policy, he did not share the American confidence in Souvanna. The President agreed, however, to state the US position toward Laos and to inquire if Boun Oum or Phoumi could offer an alternative course. Diem also said he would consider giving his visitors a "shove" in what Nolting considered to be the right direction.

(The joint communique issued on 7 May merely reaffirmed the desire of the two nations for peace and declared that the Communists should prove their good will by ending the hostilities in Laos.)

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(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1409, 4 May 62. (U) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1413, 7 May 62.

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4 May 62      By the transfer of \$59,000 from AID to  
No. 10      the Department of the Navy, the US Government transferred fiscal accountability for the MAAG Laos civic action program among the Kha to the Department of Defense, as recommended by CHMAAG Laos and CINCPAC (see item 6 April 1962).

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(C) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 913750, 4 May 62.

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4 May 62      CHMAAG Laos published Annex T to his OPLAN 63-62 providing for the withdrawal of the  
No. 11      MAAG from Laos (see item 30 March 1962).

Fulfilling

Fulfilling a requirement imposed by CINCPAC (see item 28 March 1962), Annex T provided for the formation in Bangkok, after the withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos, of an "adequate cadre" for the "quick reestablishment" of MAAG Laos in the event of a rapid deterioration of the situation there

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(TS) Annex T (Continuity of Operations) to MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, 4 May 62; OSD(ISA) FER/SEA Br. Files.

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4 May 62      During the NATO Ministerial Meeting at Athens, Secretary Rusk characterized the Lao situation as "troubled and dangerous." He added, however, that the goal of a neutral and independent Laos could be achieved if an agreement on the establishment of a coalition government could be reached quickly. Secretary Rusk laid the greatest share of blame for the failure of the Lao factions to reach agreement on the obstructionist attitude of the RLG. He noted in this connection that the US was doing its best to persuade Phoumi to negotiate seriously.

The Secretary also said that, if a successful coalition were not formed, the presence of Western forces might be required to prevent Laos, and eventually the other countries of SEA, from falling to the Communist forces. He observed, however, that Western intervention was difficult geographically and carried with it the danger of escalation. The most significant difficulty,



difficulty, the Secretary thought, was the fact that there was a "lack of real concern for independence by the Lao people themselves." The Secretary concluded by saying that although a coalition government offered the best solution to the Laos problem, it was possible that the West might in the future be faced with the question of putting forces into Laos or increasing aid to that country.

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(S) Msg, Athens to SecState, SECTO 43, 5 May 62.

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5-7  
May 62

No. 13

An unidentified enemy force of several battalions launched a heavy attack against the FAR position at Nam Tha. CHMAAG reported that the FAR reserve, consisting of the 1st Parachute Battalion and one volunteer company, had been committed to block enemy forces approaching from the vicinity of Muong Sing but had been gradually forced back on Nam Tha. The city had soon come under coordinated attack from the northwest, north, and east. On the morning of 6 May, after destroying their 105 mm howitzers and an unknown amount of ammunition, the FAR withdrew to the southwest toward Ban Houei Sai. US training teams withdrew to Luang Prabang.

Also on 6 May the CHMAAG transmitted to the JCS, at their urgent request, an assessment of the battle by his senior  
adviser

adviser in the Nam Tha area. The senior adviser described the FAR defense of Nam Tha against a highly organized, fully coordinated, and skillfully executed attack by Viet Minh and PL units as "vigorous," and surpassing any previous FAR effort.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1508, 7 May 62. 1513, 8 May 62. CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 227275, 6 May 62 and DA IN 227338, 7 May 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4379, 6 May 62.

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6-8  
May 62

No. 14

George Ball, Acting Secretary of State, suggested that the Secretary of State, who was in Athens, ask Lord Home to speak to Foreign Minister Gromyko in an effort to persuade the Soviets to secure the immediate evacuation of Nam Tha by Communist forces and arrange for the ICC to make an on-the-spot investigation of the incident. Ball also expressed the hope that Home would instruct UK Co-Chairman MacDonald to see Souphanouvong or to take some other action that would bring about these results.

Ball further suggested that Secretary Rusk instruct Ambassador Thompson to outline orally to Gromyko US views on the Communist action at Nam Tha. In a draft message, included for Thompson's use, the Acting Secretary indicated that the US had pressured Phoumi very strongly to join in responsible discussions with other Lao factions, and that in the last few days the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane had reported that these efforts were on the verge of success. Gromyko also was to be told that the US was disappointed to learn that Communist forces had seized

Nam

Nam Tha in flagrant disregard of the cease-fire agreements, and in the face of the nearly successful efforts to resume negotiations. The Ambassador also was to point out that the RLG could not be expected to negotiate under military pressure. Recalling Gromyko's former assurances that the PL would not exploit the cease-fire situation, the Ambassador was to request Gromyko to use his influence to obtain immediate evacuation of Nam Tha by the Communist forces.

Ball concluded his message to Secretary Rusk by indicating that he was considering calling on Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin to reinforce Thompson's presentation to Gromyko. (See items 9 and 15 May 1962.)

On 8 May, UK Ambassador Roberts and US Ambassador Thompson presented to Gromyko the line of argument suggested by Under Secretary Ball. In both interviews, the Soviet Foreign Minister maintained that the attack upon Nam Tha had been provoked by Phoumi. In essence, Gromyko reiterated the Soviet desire for a peaceful settlement and advised the West to exert stronger pressure on Phoumi.

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(S) Msgs, Acting SecState to Athens, TOSEC, NIACT 97, 6 May 62; Moscow to SecState, 2881, 8 May 62; 2883, 8 May 62.

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7-8  
May 62

No. 15

The JCS informed CINCPAC that, as a result of recent events in Laos, the US Army battle group (-) then engaged in training exercises in Thailand would remain in that country pending further developments.

On the following day, CINCPAC further advised CHJUSMAG Thailand that, subject to coordination with Ambassador Young, the presence of the US battle group should be explained as an extension of AIR COBRA. The US general was to avoid any comments which might lead to press speculation linking the presence of American troops to the recent developments in Laos. CHJUSMAG, also on 8 May, reported to CINCPAC that the Thai Minister of Defense and the US Ambassador concurred in the decision to retain the American troops.

(S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, 4407, 7 May 62. ADMINO CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 227563, 080315Z May 62. CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 227595, 080615Z May 62.

8 May 62      Analyzing the attack on Nam Tha for the JCS,  
CINCPAC termed it a departure from the  
No. 16      earlier Communist strategy of "limited  
but constant encroachment" of the cease-  
fire line. The Pathet Lao and Viet Minh  
apparently

apparently had ignored Souvanna's supposed authority and were now attempting a military solution to the present political stalemate. The enemy might have thought that a crushing defeat of the elite forces at Nam Tha would cause wholesale defection and consequent capitulation of the FAR elsewhere in Laos; and the attack had certainly lowered severely the morale of the FAR. CINCPAC expected the Communists to pursue the retreating FAR column in an attempt to eliminate all RLG influence in northern Laos and to increase their pressures against the FAR in central and southern Laos.

[REDACTED]

(S) Msgs, ADMINO CINCPAC to JCS,  
082151Z May 62, [REDACTED]

8 May 62 The President met with White House, Defense, and JCS representatives and decided that:

No. 17 1. The Department of State should inform Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin of "the information which we have on the situation in Laos." The Soviet Ambassador should be told of the "deep concern" of the US over the situation, particularly in the light of information suggesting that Souvanna had not been consulted about the attack and that forces responsive to him had apparently not participated in the attack.

2. Ambassador

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2. Ambassador Brown should emphasize to Phoumi that the Nam Tha debacle was "exactly what we had told him to expect as a result of his intransigence in the negotiations." US military personnel in Laos should be sure to take the same line.

3. US sources of information on happenings in Northern Laos should be improved.

(See items 8, 10, and 16 May 1962.)

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(TS) JCS 2344/45, 11 May 62; JMF 9155.2/9105 (8 May 62).

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8 May 62      Ambassador Brown, with the approval of the Secretary of State, delivered Souvanna's note (see item 1-4 May 1962) to Sisouk and expressed the hope that the RLG, while protesting vigorously against the breach of the cease-fire, would not abandon the private exchange of views with Souvanna regarding the solution of the Lao crisis. Sisouk indicated that, unless the attack on Nam Tha had altered the situation, Phoumi still wished to negotiate on the basis of his 30 April (see item) message to Souvanna. The Lao Foreign Minister, however, disapproved of the Prince's proposal for three Secretaries of State for Defense and Interior because it did not meet the RLG's demand for tripartite Defense and Interior decisions and for maintaining separate forces pending the agreement on integration

No. 18

integration. He would prefer having Souvanna retain both ministries, provided all decisions would be tripartitely made. Brown replied that the West would be sympathetic on this point and suggested that the RLG convey these arguments to Souvanna lest RLG silence be interpreted as acceptance of his proposal. Sisouk said he would consider the matter, discuss it with Phoumi, and perhaps send a reply to Souvanna in the next few days.

At Sisouk's request, Brown also discussed the US reaction to the Nam Tha attack. Brown suggested that the RLG protest to the ICC and Co-chairmen but omit reference to the possible presence of Chinese Communist troops at Nam Tha since this might become a matter of argument which would dilute the force of the RLG's protest.

Sisouk also speculated that Souphanouvong might have struck at Nam Tha to exert pressure on the RLG immediately before negotiations resumed. When informed that Souvanna had disapproved the attack, Sisouk said Souvanna should make his disapproval public, and then the RLG would invite him back to Laos.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1509, 7 May 62; 1515, 8 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 964, 7 May 62.

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Having

8 May 62

No. 19

Having learned in Paris of the seizure of Nam Tha, Souvanna cabled Khamsouk, his personal representative in Laos, that he was astonished by the attack. The Prince then instructed Khamsouk to arrange for a Pathet Lao withdrawal to the May 1961 cease-fire line. Souvanna termed the attack contrary to the instructions he had given upon his departure from Laos, that PL/KL forces would merely defend themselves against enemy attacks.

Souvanna also cabled Souphanouvong his concern at the recent attack. He told the NLHX leader that the attack was likely to create new difficulties for the settlement of national problems. Souphanouvong was asked to withdraw his troops to the 1961 cease-fire line and refrain from further attacks.

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(S) Msg, London to SecState, 4113, 8 May 62.

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8 May 62

No. 20

Avtar Singh, Indian Chairman of ICC Laos, told Ambassador Brown that, in his opinion, the seizure of Nam Tha had been "absolutely wrong," and that he had so advised his Government. Singh also passed on to Ambassador Brown reports from Xieng Khouang of rebel jubilation at the capture of Nam Tha and boasts of further impending military actions.

At



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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1518,  
8 May 62.

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8 May 62      At a meeting of representatives of the  
State Department, the White House, CAS,  
No. 21      DOD and the JCS, the discussion centered  
about lack of "hard intelligence information"  
on the situation in Northwest Laos since  
the Nam Tha attack (see item 5-7 May  
1962). Admiral Riley, speaking for the  
JCS, informed the conferees that the lack  
of intelligence information was caused  
by the enforced withdrawal of the White  
Star team during the Communist offensive,  
and that no improvement in the situation  
would be forthcoming until the fighting  
front was stabilized. In response to  
strong representations by the White House  
spokesmen, the Admiral noted that the  
improvement of the US intelligence  
capability in Laos would require a policy  
decision to accept the substantial risk  
of capture which US personnel would have to  
take in order to collect more information.

On the same day, in a message to CINCPAC,  
the Acting Chairman of the JCS, General  
Decker, requested that CHMAAG Laos prepare  
a plan for improving the intelligence  
gathering and evaluating capabilities  
of the US in Laos. The Acting Chairman  
also requested that CHMAAG submit his  
estimate of the risks which his plan would  
involve

involve for US personnel, and indicate what additional equipment he would require to put it into effect.

Replying the following day, CHMAAG Laos outlined a plan which called for daily visual and photo reconnaissance of the major road routes in northwest Laos for an indeterminate period. He also suggested that the F-101 fighters based in Thailand (ABLE MABEL) be used every two or three days for the following two weeks to obtain photos of Communist airfields at Nam Tha, Muong Sai, and Ban Nam Bac. CHMAAG also requested the use of two B-26s with pilots and crews, to be used as low altitude reconnaissance planes.

[REDACTED]

He was also attempting to get the RLG to accept the deployment of MAAG advisors and WSMTTs with the Headquarters of General La, and to place WSMTTs with the forward elements of the withdrawing forces. (CHMAAG made no reference to the risk to US personnel that would be involved in his proposals.)

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 4430, 082305Z May 62. (S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, 4431, 090018Z May 62; CHMAAG, Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 228000, 091050Z May 62.

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In

8 May 62 In a private summary of his 6 May audience  
with King Savang, Co-Chairman MacDonald  
No. 22 concluded that the King would agree to  
anything the three Princes requested, but  
there was little chance of his accepting  
leadership of the Lao Government himself  
even if the National Assembly should  
present it to him as a fait accompli.  
MacDonald pictured the King as being  
confused, long-winded, and full of contra-  
dictions on political subjects, and  
exuding a spirit of hopelessness. Not only  
was the ruler completely without hope  
himself regarding the future of his country,  
but he was incapable of inspiring hope in  
others.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1516,  
8 May 62.

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8-9  
May 62

Secretary of Defense McNamara, General  
Lemnitzer, and Assistant Secretary of Defense  
No. 23 Arthur Sylvester made a two-day visit to  
Thailand. Besides conferring with members  
of the JUSMAG and the Country Team con-  
cerning matters directly related to the  
defense of Thailand, the Secretary's party  
inspected Thai units in central and  
northeastern Thailand and discussed the  
Laotian crisis with Sarit and his advisers.

During his tour of the area near the  
Lao border, the Secretary observed that,  
although certain civic endeavors by Thai  
troops

troops appeared "promising," the over-all civic action program was "proceeding on a low key." Because of the Lao crisis, the Thai Government was thinking of sending more troops to the region, but mere strength, in Mr. McNamara's opinion, was not the answer to Communist subversion. The solution, he believed, lay in improving the economic condition and educational level of the people, in making them aware of the danger of Communism, and in organizing village defense units. According to the Secretary, Thai officers stationed in the border area exhibited a "phlegmatic -- almost complacent -- attitude" regarding the threat of Communist subversion.

Sarit, during the meeting between US and Thai officials, indicated that, if the situation in Laos grew worse, he would dispatch four additional battalions toward the border, expand public information and civic action activities, and intensify the psychological warfare campaign in Laos. The increased psychological warfare operations, however, would require the immediate services of ten additional US-Thai psychological warfare teams, each one consisting of two Americans and three Thais.

In addition, Thai officers informed General Lemnitzer that their intelligence reports indicated that a total of 12 Pathet Lao, Chinese Communist, and Viet Minh  
battalions

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battalions had taken part in the Nam Tha offensive. The CJCS observed, however, that the rumor of Chinese Communist participation could not be confirmed by "hard intelligence."

After this visit to Thailand, the Secretary and his party left for South Viet Nam. There Mr. McNamara was briefed by CHMAAG Laos on various aspects of the fighting around Nam Tha (see item 10 May 1962).

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(TS) "Visit to SEA by the Secretary of Defense, 8-11 May 1962," with app., JMF 9150/5420 (14 May 62), sec. 1. (S) Msgs, CJCS, Saigon to JCS, DA IN 228149, 9 May 62, Bangkok to SecState, 1748, 11 May 62.

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8-11  
May 62

No. 24

The FAR troops defeated at Nam Tha (see item 5-7 May 1962) retreated in complete disorganization down the Nam Choak Valley nearly 100 miles to Ban Houie Sai, on the banks of the Mekong. There were early reports of plans to regroup, first at Vien Pou Kha, and then a few miles to the northeast of Ban Houie Sai, but the FAR just kept on going. By 10 May, troops and refugees were crossing the Mekong into Thailand, and by 11 May, 1500 to 2000 FAR soldiers and 3000 to 4000 civilians had arrived in Thailand. Ban Houie Sai was abandoned without any attempt to defend it.

Reports from CHMAAG during this retreat portrayed graphically the state of the FAR troops and their commanders. General

Bounleut,

Bounleut, Commander of the FAR, contended to CHMAAG on 9 May that two PL and one Viet Minh battalion were hotly pursuing his retreating column, although US aerial reconnaissance on the same day failed to discover such pursuing forces. Bounleut also refused CHMAAG's offer to place a White Star Team with the retreating forces, to assist in planning a defense. General La, the Commander of the former Nam Tha forces, was described simply as "not receptive to US advice." Regarding the troops, CHMAAG likened them to Coxie's Army, their combat effectiveness was, he believed, "nil."

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1523, 1524, 9 May 62; 1535, 10 May 62; CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 228379, 10 May 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 227667, 8 May 62, DA IN 227986, 9 May 62, DA IN 228010, 9 May 62; DA IN 228309, 10 May 62; DA IN 228381, 10 May 62; DA IN 228424, 10 May 62; DA IN 228782, 11 May 62, DA IN 229222, 12 May 62.

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9 May 62      USARMA Vientiane reported that General Kham Lom, Chief of Staff of the Kong Le forces, maintained that the neutralist forces had not been informed of the planning of the Nam Tha and Muong Sing attacks and had been denied permission to participate in them.

No. 25

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(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 228165, 9 May 62.

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At

9 May 62 At a meeting of the ANZUS Council attended  
by Secretary of State Rusk and CINCPAC,  
No 26 Admiral Felt, in briefing the Ministers  
on the military situation in Southeast Asia,  
noted that the major concern of the US  
in Laos was whether the Nam Tha attack  
presaged a full scale resumption of the PL  
offensive. The Secretary of State then  
declared that in Laos the primary US  
objective was to secure the withdrawal of  
foreign troops; for he believed that the  
Laotians, if left to themselves, would not  
present too serious a problem.

In response to Australian inquiries  
as to whether the US was prepared to put  
troops into Laos, the Secretary replied that  
although the US did not rule out that  
possibility it wished to avoid a Korean-type  
situation. He pointed out, however, that  
South Viet Nam presented a different case,  
and that he thought that US troops could  
be used effectively in that country.

Sir Garfield Barwick, Australian  
Minister of External Affairs, asked about  
the possibility of the US using nuclear  
weapons in Southeast Asia. the point of  
the inquiry apparently being Australian  
concern that the US might use these weapons  
irresponsibly and thus set off a full-scale  
war. The Secretary reassured the Australians  
on this point and concluded by stressing the  
"importance of Australia and New Zealand  
joining the U.S. in aiding South Viet-Nam."

Ambassador

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~~TOP SECRET~~  

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(S) Msg, Wellington to SecState, A-25,  
10 May 62, (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN  
229050, 11 May 62.  

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9-10  
May 62

No. 27

Ambassador Brown reported that, after talks with General Phoumi, Co-Chairman MacDonald was convinced that Phoumi's approach to Souvanna was sincere, that he wanted a meeting of the three Princes, and that he anticipated a solution to the Lao problem, including an agreement on the issue of the Defense and Interior positions. MacDonald described Phoumi as still the same "disgusting, unreliable and deceptive person" as before, with the same ambitions and desires. He added, however, that Phoumi had been forced to change his viewpoint by US and Thai pressures.

MacDonald also reported that he stressed two points to "all whom he saw" in Khang Khay. First, seizure of Nam Tha, a clear breach of the cease-fire, was undermining the confidence of the world, and specifically of the British, in the PL. Second, the seizure gravely prejudiced the chance of fruitful negotiations just at the moment when Phoumi, under pressure from effective US sanctions, had made sincere motions toward reopening them. It was, therefore, up to the PL to decide how to remedy the situation.

On



On 10 May, the UK Co-Chairman also visited Ambassador Young at Bangkok. Although MacDonald did not seem optimistic about forcing the Pathet Lao to yield Nam Tha, he showed interest in a suggestion, made earlier by Falaize, that all parties might agree to a restoration of the cease-fire line, provided this were done simultaneously with the meeting of the Princes at the Plaine des Jarres. MacDonald also confided to Young that he had suggested to his Government that he seek to persuade Pushkin (see item 15 May 1962) the Soviet Co-Chairman, that Phoumi would negotiate in good faith.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1531, 10 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1739, 11 May 62. (C) Vientiane to SecState, 1518, 9 May 62.

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10 May 62      Ambassador Brown, in analyzing the "dangerous and ugly" situation brought on by the Nam  
No. 28      Tha attack, warned that if the US did not react in some convincing way, further aggression would be encouraged and the effort to achieve a really neutral Laos would fail. He therefore suggested that the RLG might be purged of its weak and undesirable members and that, possibly, a new Prime Minister pledged to a policy of national reconciliation might be appointed.

In addition, the US should give every possible assistance to re-equipping, reorganizing, and retraining the FAR troops who

who had escaped Nam Tha and assist them in any effort, considered reasonable by MAAG Laos, to recover at least some of the lost territory. Souvanna should be urged to declare his opposition to the cease-fire violation. In his survey of possible US reactions, the Ambassador discussed the question of resuming economic aid to the RLG and suggested that resumption could be justified by the cease-fire violation which had taken advantage of US "good faith."

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1534, 10 May 62.

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10 May 62      CINCPAC directed certain "precautionary steps," to shorten the 96-hour reaction time of  
No. 29      Joint Task Force 116 (the force assigned for CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59-Phase II Laos), as follows:

1. The Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division, was to activate JTF-116 Headquarters, of which he was the designated commander (CJTF-116). also, he was to assemble the task force staff, and begin refining movement plans. (JTF-116 component commanders were not, however, to report to the CJTF until ordered by CINCPAC.)

2. CINCPACAF was directed to arrange through CHJUSMAG Thailand for moving 4 F-100s to Thailand for an "operational visit."

3. CINCPACFLT

3. CINCPACFLT was directed to "give afloat BLT a good workout ashore," anticipate moving the VALLEY FORGE toward the Gulf of Siam, and operate the HANCOCK in the southernmost extremity of her "normal readiness operating area."

4. CINCUSARPAC was directed to compute the "tail" needed to support the 1st Battle Group, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, which had been training with Thai contingents in Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 23-23 April 1962), and report this requirement to CINCPAC.

On 11 May, Ambassador Young approved the deployment of the F-100s to Thailand, and gave his "full endorsement" to the retention in Thailand of the US Army Battle Group. on 12 May CINCPAC authorized the actual movement of the F-100s from Clark AFB, P.I., to Don Muang, Thailand.

Also on 11 May, CINCPAC was directed by the Acting Chairman, JCS, to sail "appropriate elements" of the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam, and he directed CINCPACFLT to sail to that area the VALLEY FORGE with its BLT.

(See item 12 May 1962.)

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CG, 3rd MARDIV (CJTF 116) et al., DA IN 228346, 10 May 62; PACAF to CINCPAC, DA IN 229463, 11 May 62; ADMINO CINCPAC to PACAF, DA IN 229462, 11 May 62. (S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4490, 11 May 62. CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 110625Z May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1747, 11 May 62.

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The

~~TOP SECRET~~  
10 May 62

No. 30

The President met with the Acting Secretary of State, the Director, CIA, the Acting Chairman, JCS, and State and White House officials to consider State Department proposals concerning Laos.

The State Department believed that the capture of Nam Tha and other "continuing military encroachments" by the Pathet Lao had raised the possibility of a Communist attempt to take over Laos by force. Moreover, the recent Communist actions implied that they did not believe it likely that the US would intervene to stop them. This belief would become even more firm if the US did not take some action to re-establish a deterrent."

Regarding the cause of the attack on Nam Tha, the State Department assigned indirect responsibility to Phoumi. He had invited the attack and would as a consequence probably lose all of northern Laos, as well as some of his best battalions.

The State Department recommended that the US, in order to bring about a "new cease-fire" and the temporary stabilization of a "new de facto partition," should:

1. Notify the Soviets, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong that the US remained committed to negotiating a neutral coalition government for Laos, but that the US could not tolerate unilateral Communist military advances.

2. Provide plausible evidence of the above commitment by:

- a. Initiating

a. Initiating appropriate movements of the Seventh Fleet toward the Gulf of Siam.

b. Sending the US Army Battle Group now in Thailand (see item 23-28 April 1962) to the Thai border opposite Vientiane, and urging the Thai to take some similar action and to plan with the US for possible future action.

c. Initiating measures for improvement of communications in Thailand.

d. Beginning the longer range measure of improving port and transit facilities in northern South Viet Nam.

3. If the above actions had their anticipated effects, persuade Souvanna to return to Laos and increase its pressure on Phoumi to enter realistic negotiations. At the same time the US should attempt "to progressively undermine Phoumi's prestige and political influence and to encourage opposition to Phoumi especially in the Assembly and the Army--laying the groundwork . . . for Phoumi's removal and replacement."

After the State Department proposals had been presented to the President the Acting Chairman, JCS, General Decker, acting with the concurrence of the JCS, recommended the following alternative courses of action:

a. Demand that the International Control Commission go to the scene for investigation of the cease-fire violation around Nam Tha. Also demand

that

that the Communist forces withdraw to positions held prior to the attack on Muong Sing.

b. Bring diplomatic pressure to bear on the USSR to discontinue aid to the enemy forces.

c. Institute an information program designed to display to the world the flagrant and unprovoked violation of the cease-fire agreement.

d. Resume financial assistance and increase military assistance to Laos provided they will agree to accept US advice.

e. Remove current restraints on Phoumi's freedom of military action.

f. Provide for appropriate air support to the RLG forces (to include T6, B-26, Jungle Jim).

g. Enlist Thai and other Allied support in the increased training effort.

h. Deploy the US Army Battle Group (-) now in Thailand to positions along the Thai-Laos border as a further extension of Joint US-Thai training exercises.

i. Increase the tempo of Meo and Kha operations.

j. Make it apparent that US forces for deployment to Southeast Asia in support of SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC Oplan 32-59, Phase II (Laos), have been alerted.

k. Request increased alertness and movements of additional Thai forces towards Laos borders.

l. Provide aircraft, either covert US, or other, to interdict Communist airlift in Laos.

In the event that the foregoing actions did not result in the restoration of the 3 May 1961 cease-fire line, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the only alternative to prevent Communist domination of Laos rested in the implementation in substance of SEATO Plan 5 with such SEATO members as would be willing to participate.

(On

(On the following day, the JCS presented the same recommendation to the Secretary of Defense. In the memorandum containing these recommendations the JCS indicated that they did not concur with the State Department proposal that Phoumi be undercut and eventually deposed. Although Phoumi must be made to understand that he must follow US advice he must also, as the strongest known anti-Communist Lao, remain the head of pro-Western Lao forces.

The JCS also stated that the attack on Nam Tha had indicated conclusively to them that Souvanna could not control the Pathet Lao. It seemed futile to the JCS, therefore, to depend upon Souvanna to provide the requisite leadership for a neutral Laos. (See item 5 May 1962 for messages sent by Souvanna indicating his concern over the Nam Tha affair.)

The conclusion reached at the White House meeting was that all proposed courses of action, except those diplomatic moves already implemented (see item 8 May 1962), should be held in abeyance until the views of Secretary McNamara, and General Lemnitzer, both touring Southeast Asia (see item 8-11 May 1962), and CINCPAC had been obtained (See item 12 May 1962.)

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(TS) JCS 2344/43, 10 May 62, (TS) JCSM-376-62, 11 May 62, derived from JCS 2344/44, 16 May 62; (TS) Note to Control Div, 10 May 62; all in JMF 9155.2/3100 (10 May 62). (TS) Msg, JCS to COMUSMACV Saigon, JCS 4488, 10 May 62.

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Phoumi

10 May 62 Phoumi met with Ambassador Brown at the General's request to discuss the Lao situation in light of the Nam Tha defeat. Assuming Phoumi wanted to discuss Nam Tha, Ambassador Brown had requested instructions from the State Department on the previous day. The Department ordered him to "hammer on the theme" that Phoumi had only himself to blame for the recent defeats. Nam Tha had proven that a political solution was Phoumi's only salvation. Therefore, he should be responsive to Souvanna's message (see item 1-4 May 1962), and indicate that he was ready to initiate negotiations immediately on the basis of giving up the Defense and Interior posts.

During the meeting, Phoumi admitted that Nam Tha had been a serious military as well as political defeat and asked the US to help arrange for RLG re-occupation of the town and the stationing of an ICC team there. Ambassador Brown agreed to these points. After listening to Brown's detailed advice, Phoumi said that he would have Sisouk draft a message stating that the RLG was prepared to resume three-party negotiations and to yield the Defense and Interior posts to Souvanna with the understanding that all important decisions would be made by the three Princes jointly and that the armed forces and civilian administration would remain



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remain in being pending agreement on national integration (see item 11 May 1962).

Ambassador Brown also reported that Sisouk had admitted to Co-Chairman MacDonald the reasons for Phoumi's present sincere approach to Souvanna: the effectiveness of US economic pressures against the RLG; and the RLG's diplomatic defeat at Bangkok (see item 9-10 May 1962).

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(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1527, 9 May 62; 1530, 10 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 928, 9 May 62.

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10 May 62      General Tucker, CHMAAG Laos, met with Secretary McNamara at Nha Trang, South Viet Nam, and gave a summary of recent events in Laos. During this presentation, General Tucker stated that, prior to the Communist attack, he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the FAR to adjust its "low-ground defenses" at Nam Tha. Although the leadership given by FAR NCOs and officers during the battle had been notoriously poor, the Lao private soldiers had given a reasonably good account of themselves. The FAR, however, could not be expected to fight effectively unless the quality of its leaders was improved. General Tucker also expressed doubt that any really violent fighting had taken place after the initial blow at Nam Tha. Finally,

CHMAAG,

CHMAAG, on the basis of enemy logistic activities, warned that an attack might be expected in the general area of Thakhek.

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(TS) Visit to Southeast Asia by the Secretary of Defense, 8-11 May 62, with app , JMF 9150/5420 (14 May 62) sec 1.

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10 May 62 Under Secretary of State Ball, in a message to the US Ambassadors at Bangkok and  
No. 33 Vientiane, declared that the immediate objectives of US policy were the re-establishment of the cease-fire and the restoration of a situation in which a coalition government could successfully be formed. The US, he emphasized, was directing its Laos policy toward these ends and not toward the support of Phoumi. The Ambassadors were to make sure that all US agencies and personnel in both Laos and Thailand conformed to this policy. In addition, the Ambassadors were to inform the Lao and Thai Governments that the US blamed the Nam Tha disaster upon Phoumi's refusal to heed American political and military advice.

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(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1737, 10 May 62.

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11 May 62 Acting Secretary of State Ball directed Ambassador Brown to influence the RLG  
No. 34 against making an appeal to the UN concerning the recent breach of the cease-fire, even though the plea was merely intended to inform the international body  
and

and therefore did not call for a meeting of the Security Council. Since initiative in restoring the cease-fire lay with the Soviets, an appeal of any sort to the UN could only force the USSR to harden its position and abandon any behind-the-scenes action to re-establish the truce in Laos. The Department of State also hoped that Brown had squelched any RLG impulse to appeal to SEATO, since any such action would produce a "nearly impossible situation."

On the following day, the US Ambassador reported that the Lao Foreign Minister had yielded to arguments of the Western Ambassadors and agreed to defer an appeal to the UN. Sisouk also had agreed to withhold an appeal to SEATO, but he reserved the right to take such action if the situation became untenable.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 984, 11 May 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1546, 12 May 62. (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1548, 11 May 62.

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11 May 62    The Department of State transmitted an exchange of messages between Prince Souvanna No. 35    in Paris and the RLG. The RLG informed Souvanna it desired the rapid resumption on a solid basis of negotiations toward the formation of a coalition government. In view of the breach of the cease-fire, the RLG regretted Souvanna's prolonged absence from Laos. Specifically the RLG was

was prepared to discuss the assignment of Defense and Interior ministries to Souvanna provided firm assurances were given on the following: 1) a three-Prince agreement would be sought on all important decisions by the new government; 2) the three groups would keep their forces in place pending their integration in a unified army as provided for in the Zurich agreement, and 3) the cabinet was prepared to accept the idea of a tripartite meeting.

Ambassador Gavin reported from Paris on 12 May that Souvanna demanded the right to summon the tripartite meeting at the Plaine des Jarres under previous agreements. He reported that the British and French considered Souvanna both proper and practical in naming the place and date of the meeting, especially since Souphanouvong would not attend if the session were held elsewhere. Furthermore, if Souvanna met with Phoumi and the RLG ministers before returning to the Plaine des Jarres, he would be considered suspect by Souphanouvong.

Souvanna's reply to the RLG, delivered to Foreign Minister Sisouk by Ambassador Brown, contained four statements: 1) he refused to agree to any preliminaries to immediate negotiations, 2) he would return to Laos if all accepted the principle of a tripartite meeting at the Plaine des Jarres and sincerely desired a peaceful settlement of the Lao problem; 3) he affirmed that assurances and concessions could be given during the meeting by representatives of the various groups in order to form a coalition government promptly; and 4) he would set a date for the tripartite

tripartite meeting before returning to Laos if such a meeting at the Plaine des Jarres was agreed to.

On the same day the French Embassy gave the Department of State its country's views on Souvanna's message. In brief, the French declared that the three Princes should meet as soon as possible at the Plaine des Jarres where Souvanna's presence would have the useful effect of curtailing Souphanouvong's military actions.

The Secretary of State agreed with the French and British that the RLG had no basis for refusing to meet at Plaine des Jarres, and that the meeting of Souvanna and Phoumi at Vientiane would give the wrong impression to Souphanouvong. The US wanted the French to urge Souvanna to accept privately Phoumi's modified troika proposal for Defense and Interior. If this were done the US could probably pressure the RLG into publicly giving up the posts without stating preconditions and agreeing to a meeting at the place chosen by Souvanna.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1543, 11 May 62. Paris to SecState, 5342 and 5343, 12 May 62. SecState to Paris, 6037, 14 May 62.

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11 May 62 The Defense Intelligence Agency in an appraisal of the Lao situation observed that:

- No. 36 1. The fact that Kong Le troops were apparently excluded from the assault phase of the Nam Tha operations emphasized the "expanding domination of North Vietnamese-Pathet Lao forces over those of Souvanna."

2. The

2. The military capability of the Communist forces in Laos has been built up by the continued delivery of material from the Bloc countries.

3. The Communists had the capability of taking control of major population centers with little prior preparation and without giving any advance indications.

4. The FAR had no will to fight, and there was no reason to believe that this attitude would be overcome in the near future.

5. The withdrawal of RLG troops from Nam Tha virtually eliminated governmental authority in northern Laos and opened western Luang Prabang Province and Nam Tha Province to Communist domination.

6. It was not believed that the Nam Tha attack marked the opening of a general offensive, but in the absence of either an effective military counter to the Nam Tha action or significant progress toward a coalition government, there would be an increasing likelihood that the Communists would undertake "nibbling" offensive operations elsewhere in Laos.

7. A Communist military victory in Laos would orient Burma and Cambodia further toward the Communists, and expose Thailand to invasion from Laos. It would make South Viet Nam the primary target of the Communists in SEA.

8. It

8. It was not believed possible that indigenous Southeast Asian military forces could prevent the Communists from subjugating Southeast Asia.

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(S-NOFORN), DIA Intelligence Bulletin, 93-62, 11 May 62, pp. (1)-(3).

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11, 12  
May 62

No. 37

In preparation for a White House meeting, the JCS on 11 May asked CINCPAC's views on: 1) the adequacy of SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 in the light of the current situation in Laos, 2) the best position for the US battle group (-) presently in Thailand for "maximum political effect and military flexibility"; and 3) the adequacy of the forces remaining committed for SEATO Plan 5 if some SEATO nations did not provide their contingents.

On the following day, CINCPAC provided his views as follows:

1. Either SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II - Laos) was adequate for achieving its stated objectives under current conditions in Laos.

2. The Battle Group (-) would be most effective politically in the Udorn-Nang Khai area (near Vientiane), but more militarily flexible at Ubon (near Pakse). For both political and military effect, the battle group should be stationed at Ubon and a Marine BLT sent to Udorn.

3. Replacements

3. Replacements could be provided for any of the scheduled national contingents that were not in fact provided.

(The meeting, held on 12 May, was the occasion of no major decisions regarding Laos.)

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4497, 11 May 62. CINCPAC to JCS, 120919Z May 62.

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11-12  
May 62

No. 38

Ambassador Young reported that Thanat, during a conversation with British Co-Chairman MacDonald, had proposed that the Geneva Conference reconvene to consider the breach of the Laotian cease-fire by Communist forces at Nam Tha. The Thai Foreign Minister believed that the Conference, proceeding with the members presently on hand, could prove that it was carrying out its responsibilities, could publicize the Pathet Lao's disregard of the cease-fire, could spur neutral nations to criticize the Communist attack, and could possibly assist the USSR in restraining other outbursts by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh. MacDonald, however, had expressed doubts regarding the propaganda value to the West of a Conference session dealing with Nam Tha.

Ambassador Young, in requesting guidance concerning Thanat's proposal, expressed to the Secretary of State his belief that a reconvened Conference would enable the US and its Allies to register a strong protest over



over the Nam Tha offensive and also might possibly serve to deter the Communists from launching further attacks. Secretary Rusk, however, replied on the following day that the only hope of restoring the cease-fire "lies with Soviet action behind the scenes." In the Secretary's judgment, a Conference session, with its attendant publicity, would force the USSR to support the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao, thus resulting in a hardening of the Soviet line which, in turn, would lessen the chances for restoration of the cease-fire.

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(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1741, 12 May 62; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1749, 11 May 62.

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12 May 62      The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown and others that it had been decided  
No. 39      at the highest level (see item 10 May 1962) to remove General Phoumi from the Lao scene. The decision resulted from Phoumi's stubborn resistance to an international agreement on the Lao problem, his untrustworthiness, and his constant disregard for US military advice, culminating in the defeat at Nam Tha. The Secretary of State considered it an opportune movement to bring Phoumi under control and to diminish his paramount influence within the RLG in such a manner that he could gradually be removed as a power factor

factor in Laos. The first steps should be directed toward removing Phoumi from ministerial responsibility and restricting him to his position as FAR military commander functioning directly under MAAG guidance. Later, the US could work toward a possible reorganization of the RLG.

The Secretary ordered that the following measures be taken immediately:

- 1) CHMAAG should outline to Phoumi in elaborate detail the causes of the Nam Tha defeat, emphasizing his responsibility for the rout;
- 2) steps should be taken to follow up and encourage proposals for the reorganization of the RLG that would restrict Phoumi to the role of military commander;
- 3) MAAG should drive a hard bargain with Phoumi, exchanging an agreement to re-equip and transport his defeated forces for a pledge that the FAR would accept MAAG advice and Phoumi would drop all ministerial functions; and
- 4) [REDACTED] should begin subverting Colonel Siho's units in an effort to remove Phoumi's most effective terror weapons over Vientiane politicians.

The Secretary of State noted that the removal of Phoumi from Laos political and military life was now an undeviating policy objective of the US, paralleling the fundamental US aim of restoring the cease-fire, establishing a coalition government,

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government, and implementing the Geneva Agreements. (See item 13 May 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 987, 12 May 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1552, 13 May 62; and 1553, 13 May 62.

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12 May 62 CINCUSARPAC summarized and attempted to explain several reports that KMT remnants  
No. 40 were prepared to enter battle on the side of the FAR in northern Laos. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] CHMAAG Laos and others, over 1000 KMT were ready to fight in the Ban Houie Sai area. CINCUSARPAC believed that the explanation for this possible KMT intervention might lie in recent reports from Taiwan that the GRC intended to place or activate guerrilla forces all along the Chinese Communist borders as a prelude to invasion of the mainland. (See item 18-22 May 1962.)

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(S) Msg, CINCUSARPAC to CO 500th INTC Gp, Cp. Drake Japan et al., DA IN 229383, 12 May 62.

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12 May 62 CINCPAC informed DIA that, although Lao and Thai sources were persistently  
No. 41 reporting that Chinese Communists troops had participated in the attacks on Muong Sing (see item 3 May 1962) and Nam Tha (see item 5-7 May 1962), no reliable evidence had been found to verify these charges.

CHMAAG

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 231133,  
16 May 62.

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12 May 62 CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that he had sent  
a White Star team to Ban Houie Sai after  
No. 42 the FAR exodus. The team reported that  
neither FAR nor enemy were there. CHMAAG  
moreover, had reconnoitered the area as  
he flew into Thailand to see Bounleut, and  
had seen no troop activity at all. He  
therefore planned, if CINCPAC approved,  
to send the White Star team up the road  
toward Nam Tha in order to establish  
the actual location of the enemy.

On the same day, CINCPAC approved  
CHMAAG's plan. He also told CHMAAG  
to make every effort to persuade the FAR  
to reoccupy Ban Houie Sai; in so doing, he  
anticipated a JCS request of the following  
day. (See items 13 and 14-17 May 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC,  
DA IN 229243, 12 May 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG  
Laos, DA IN 229367, 12 May 62, JCS to  
CINCPAC, JCS 4526, 13 May 62.

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12 May 62 Phoumi arrived in Rangoon for a one-day  
good-will visit during which he saw General  
No. 43 Ne Win and the Burmese Foreign Minister.

The visit probably corresponded to  
similar trips made by Phoumi and Boun  
Oum to other Asian countries in an effort  
to gain support for the RLG.

Ne Win's approval of Phoumi's visit  
indicated, in the US Ambassador's opinion,  
increased

increased Burmese concern over Laos  
due to the recent deterioration of the  
situation there.

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(LOU) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 836,  
14 May 62.

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13 May 62      Ambassador Brown, in a message to the  
Secretary of State, recommended that in  
No. 44      order to launch an effort to reorganize  
the RLG and to persuade Phoui Sananikone  
to become Prime Minister, the US offer  
some inducement to add to current pressures.  
It could promise to restore economic aid  
immediately to the RLG if Phoui would  
accept the leadership of a reorganized,  
strengthened government pledged to negotiate  
urgently with Souvanna and Souphanouvong  
for a coalition government. Brown believed  
that Phoumi might be persuaded in these  
circumstances to restrict himself to the  
role of military commander.

Ambassador Brown also reported that  
the only apparent obstacle to Souvanna's  
return was the selection of a locale for  
the next three-Prince meeting. Brown was  
pressuring Phoumi to meet Souvanna on the  
Plaine des Jarres. Both Souvanna and  
Souphanouvong had made it clear that they  
considered Phoumi's cooperation and  
participation essential to the success of  
negotiations. Brown requested guidance.  
(See item 13 May 1962.)

The

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1553,  
13 May 62.

13 May 62      The JCS directed CINCPAC to: 1) offload  
a Marine BLT and its helicopters from  
No. 45      the VALLEY FORGE and move them to  
Udon. 2) dispatch one Marine attack  
squadron to Udon. 3) deploy the US Army  
Battle Group (-) already in Thailand for  
AIR COBRA to Udon, reinforce it to "self-  
contained" strength, and reinforce the  
9th Logistical Command unit at Korat to the  
extent necessary to support the augmented  
battle group; 4) move one USAF tactical  
air squadron and supporting units to a  
Thai base satisfactory to CINCPAC and agreeable  
to the RTG; and 5) move CJTF-116, necessary  
elements of his staff, his component  
commanders and their staffs to Thailand,  
and assign CJTF-116 operational control  
of all US combat units in the country.  
The interim mission of the US forces in  
Thailand was set forth by the JCS as "to  
give clear indication of US intentions to  
carry out its commitments to assist in  
the defense of Thailand," to provide by  
their presence a "precautionary impact"  
upon the situation in Laos, and to attain  
positions that would reduce US "reaction  
time" to possible further developments  
in the area.

In an immediately subsequent  
message of the same day, CINCPAC was also  
directed

directed to establish the United States Military Assistance Command, Thailand (USMACTHAI), with General Harkins (COMUSMACV) as commander (COMUSMACTHAI). The Deputy CINCUSARPAC, Lieutenant General Richardson, was designated CJTF-116. JTF-116 was placed under COMUSMACTHAI, as were JUSMAG Thailand and such other US military elements as were in Thailand.

On the same day acting on instructions from the Secretary of State, Ambassador Young and General Harkins sought the necessary Thai approval of the US deployments. Thai Prime Minister Sarit agreed readily to all deployments, withholding his approval only to the exact locations of the various units.

(On 14 May, the Thai approved all deployments, except the stationing of the Battle Group at Ubon. Because of this objection the JCS on 15 May ordered the Battle Group to deploy, not to Ubon, but to the vicinity of Korat. At the same time, the JCS specified that the USAF squadron would deploy to Takhlī, the location agreed to by the Thai. On 15 May, all diplomatic clearances having been obtained, CINCPAC actually established USMACTHAI, ordered CJTF-116 to assemble elements of his staff, and directed CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT, and CINCUSARPAC to move the desired units to Thailand.)

Phoumi

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4527, JCS 4528, 13 May 62. Bangkok to SecState, 1760, 14 May 62, SecState to Bangkok, 1742, 12 May 62. CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 229645, 14 May 62 JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4551, 15 May 62.

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13 May 62 Phoumi told CHMAAG that he intended to reoccupy Ban Houie Sai. He claimed that  
No. 46 one FAR battalion from across the Mekong was already back in town and he said that more troops would be sent in from other areas in Laos. Phoumi asked MAAG assistance in transporting these troops and in transporting to Laos and re-equipping the FAR evacuees in Thailand.

CHMAAG did not commit himself at this time to transporting the evacuees. Later in the day, pursuant to Secretary Rusk's 12 May directive (see item) CHMAAG informed the Lao leader that the US would not move the FAR troops in Thailand back to Laos unless there was concrete evidence that Phoumi would: 1) remove incompetent FAR officers, and heed MAAG advice in selecting replacements. 2) develop a first class NCO corps, 3) reorganize the Ministry of Defense and delegate ample authority to major staff officers, 4) make the logistical command effective; 5) make full use of training facilities in Thailand and allow CHMAAG to approve the units nominated for such training. 6) produce qualified and promising personnel for  
off-shore



off-shore training, 7) obtain CHMAAG approval for all plans, tactical operations, and deployments of battalion- or larger-size units, and 8) accept MAAG advice and assistance when and where it was offered. The effect of the recent debacle in the north, CHMAAG said, had been to destroy all US confidence in Phoumi as a military leader.

Phoumi in reply agreed that there should be the closest cooperation between CHMAAG and himself, and he averred that he had long ago instructed all his commanders to cooperate freely with their MAAG opposite numbers. Reiterating his intention to send troops back into Ban Houei Sai, Phoumi promised CHMAAG that his advice would be sought on any new FAR defense plans.

CHMAAG termed this promise "a good first step," and he counselled Phoumi to concentrate in the future on military rather than political affairs. CHMAAG decided finally that he would institute the evacuation airlift on the following day.

Also on 13 May, a report from US officials in the Ban Houei Sai area indicated that two FAR companies had indeed re-entered the town, which the enemy had not yet even approached. The great majority of the FAR troops in Thailand, the report continued, had  
been

been disarmed and were awaiting transportation to an airfield for subsequent evacuation to Laos.

(See item 14-17 May 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 229473, 13 May 62. DA IN 229501, 13 May 62. USARMA Bangkok to ACSI et al., DA IN 229552, 13 May 62.

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13 May 62      When Ambassador Young and General Harkins approached Sarit to secure his approval  
No. 47      of the US deployments (see item 13 May 1962), they also asked for assurances of Thai cooperation, especially in allowing US forces to use communication and transportation facilities, and for the deployment, if possible, of additional Thai troops along the Lao border.

Sarit guaranteed the US full use of Thai transportation facilities, asking only that the US use as much air transport as possible in order to place minimum strain on ground transportation, but added that no final decision had been made concerning the dispatch of additional forces to the threatened frontier.

When Young disclosed that the reduction of US reaction time to future crises was a mission of the American force assigned to Thailand, both Sarit and Thanat called the Ambassador's attention to a crisis which they believed was already in the making. The Thai Prime Minister stated that

that Phoumi appeared to be planning to abandon the population centers and, if necessary, to withdraw to the south. Since this strategy would expose the greater part of the Lao-Thai border, Sarit hoped that the US would prevent the partition of Laos. Ambassador Young believed that Sarit, in agreeing to the US deployments, had assumed that the troops might be used to prevent Phoumi from being forced to adopt a strategy that would divide the kingdom.

The Secretary of State, in a message sent on 13 May, characterized Young's conversation with Sarit as "satisfactory." The purpose of the agreed deployments, Secretary Rusk pointed out, was to "reinforce the position and morale of Thailand and to send a message to Moscow that a major breach of the cease-fire could be dangerous business." Thus, it was important that both Sarit and Phoumi realize that the deployment of American forces to Thailand did not constitute a commitment to sustain the RLG, for the US was continuing to follow a policy designed to achieve a neutral and independent Laos under a coalition government.

In commenting upon Sarit's indecision regarding the dispatch of additional Thai troops to the Lao border, Secretary Rusk declared that the US and Thailand would have to  
act

act together. Although the US would honor its commitments, the fact remained that Thai forces, since they were more acceptable than Caucasian soldiers in the opinion of the populace, would be far more suitable, on both political and military grounds, for a campaign against guerrillas. Thus, in the absence of organized enemy action, US troops should support the indigenous forces.

The Secretary of State, turning to Sarit's concern lest Laos be partitioned, repeated the US conviction that Thailand's security would best be served by a political settlement that would rid Laos of all foreign troops. Left to themselves, the Lao would be "little or no threat to anyone." Secretary Rusk warned, however, that events might force the US to choose between a divided Laos and a kingdom controlled in its entirety by the Communists.

The Secretary pointed out that Sarit should not judge the US determination to help defend Thailand according to the standards that had applied to Laos, a landlocked kingdom whose citizens seemed unwilling to fight for their independence.

The Secretary instructed Ambassador Young to make these sentiments clear to Sarit. Young was also asked to obtain Sarit's concurrence to a possible SEATO action, such as the return to Thailand of  
the

the various AIR COBRA contingents, so that the member governments might be approached (see item 14 May 1962).

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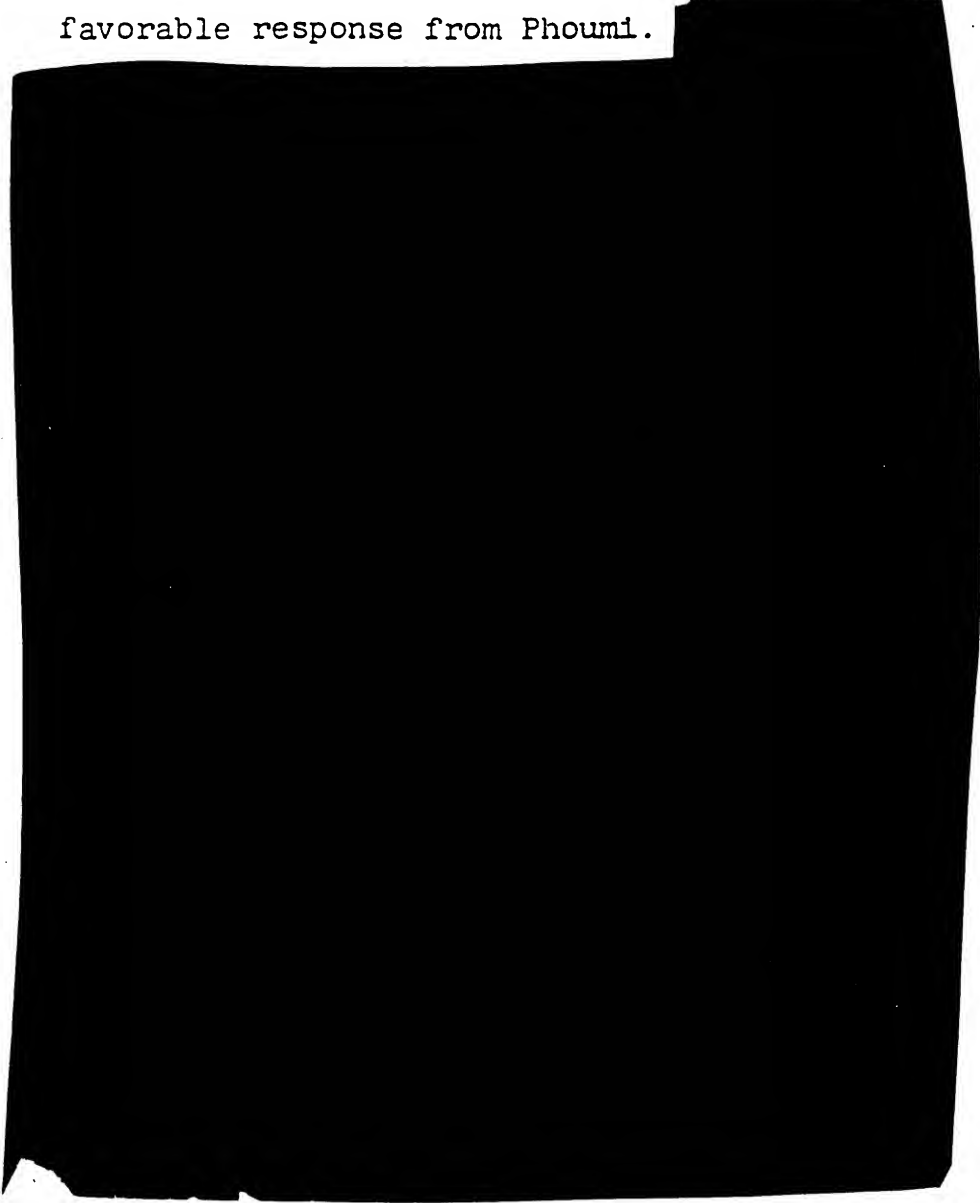
(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1742, 12 May 62; PRIORITY 1747, 13 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1760, 14 May 62.

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13 May 62      The Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown a clarification of the high-level US decision to eliminate General Phoumi from the RLG (see item 12 May 1962).  
No. 48      While the ideal result of US efforts, Phoumi's "complete disappearance" at one stroke was patently unfeasible, the Secretary proposed a two-stage operation: 1) removal of Phoumi from the political scene by restricting him to his role in defense, and 2) reduction of his military power by bringing him under MAAG control. The US preferred that Phoumi resign from both ministerial positions and function solely as the military commander of FAR. If this was impossible to arrange, Ambassador Brown was instructed to attempt a reorganization of the RLG with Phoui as Prime Minister, or at least as deputy under Boun Oum with full responsibility for political and civil affairs and equal rank to Defense Minister Phoumi.

As an inducement, the Secretary of State authorized Ambassador Brown to inform Lao politicians that US assistance would be resumed, although not necessarily on a monthly basis

basis, if the RLG was reorganized along these lines. A more closely controlled system of financial assistance was considered necessary in dealing with the possibly intractable RLG. The Secretary also stated to Ambassador Brown that CHMAAG might transport those FAR elements in Thailand to Laos, but ordered that an offer to re-equip these elements be withheld pending a favorable response from Phoumi.



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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 990, 13 May 62; and 993, 14 May 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1555, 14 May 62.

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In

14 May 62     In a meeting with the British and French Ambassadors, the Secretary of State announced  
No. 49     that the President's decision to move US forces into Thailand at the request of the Thai Government was an effort to strengthen the US position in SEA and to prepare the US to fulfill promptly its SEATO commitments if the need arose. The Secretary asked all SEATO Allies to support the US action in Thailand and specifically asked the British and French to return to Thailand the air units recently used in the AIR COBRA exercise. The US had made no decision to commit troops to Laos, the Secretary added, and its policy remained unchanged, for it still sought a new cease-fire in Laos and a resumption of negotiations for a coalition government. Although the US wanted to leave the Communists in doubt concerning future intentions, it did not want to give Phoumi the "least impression" that the US would support him or the Lao Government.

The Secretary of State also charged that the attack on Nam Tha was not only a flagrant breach of the cease-fire, but a complete "double-cross" by the USSR. The Secretary pointed to Foreign Minister Gromyko's assurance that the PL would not attack Nam Tha or any other important center while the US was pressuring Phoumi into negotiations on a realistic basis

(see

(see item 27 January 1962). Phoumi was on the verge of coming to an agreement when the PL attacked Nam Tha.

In a message sent the same day to the US Ambassadors to the other SEATO nations, Secretary Rusk expressed hope that, if the RTG so requested, Australia and New Zealand would again deploy those forces which had taken part in AIR COBRA, and that the Philippines and Pakistan would send military units to Thailand.

Ambassador Young, moreover, was instructed to await official announcement of the deployment of US troops and then call a meeting of the Council representatives. He would provide them with whatever information might be authorized by the JCS and urge the RTG to invite the other SEATO members to send troops to Thailand.

The Secretary, by urging that the military moves be treated as precautionary measures that would enable the organization to fulfill its treaty obligations, hoped to avoid debate concerning the justification, under the terms of the Manila Pact, for landing troops in Thailand.

(The meeting of the SEATO Council representatives was held in Bangkok on 16 May. The representatives approved the US action and noted that consultations were continuing regarding similar deployments

by



by other member nations. For those SEATO nations which joined the US in its precautionary measures and the extent of their contributions, see item 31 May 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1756, 14 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 1014, 16 May 62. (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), pp. 905-906.

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14-15  
May 62

No. 50

On 14 May Harriman requested Gavin to inform Souvanna that the movement of the Seventh Fleet (see item 10 May 1962) in no way indicated a change in US policy towards Laos or toward Souvanna personally. After conveying the message to Souvanna, Gavin reported the next day that Souvanna, although relieved by the US assurances, continued to be somewhat apprehensive lest the Thais succeed in persuading the US to send its forces into Laos. Souvanna believed that this action could "have most unfortunate results." Souvanna also expressed his belief that the action at Nam Tha had been deliberately started by Phoumi in an effort to precipitate US intervention. He added, however, that he would attempt to have Souphanouvong withdraw the Pathet Lao to its 3 May positions.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, NIACT 6098, 14 May 62; Paris to SecState, 5390, 15 May 62.

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CHMAAG

14-17  
May 62

No. 51

CHMAAG ordered a White Star team to advance toward Nam Tha to ascertain the location of enemy forces (see item 12 May 1962). From 14 to 16 May, the team advanced some 30 kilometers without encountering any opposition. At this point CHMAAG ordered the patrol to stop and prepare a defensive position. Obviously angered, CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that the 20 FAR troops supposedly helping the patrol were "worthless"; further advance by the WSMTT would result only in "American blood . . . spilled for a gutless group."

During the time of the patrol's advance, most of the Lao troops in Thailand were evacuated by boat and Air America planes to Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. Also, some 600 FAR troops moved back into Ban Houie Sai and began to establish defensive positions; but CHMAAG was not altogether satisfied with their efforts. He related that he could get no Lao of higher grade than major to return to Ban Houie Sai, despite the fact that the US had been using the air strip for several days. He told CINCPAC that he planned to ask Phoumi for a fresh battalion to move back up the road toward Nam Tha (see item 13 May 1962).

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(S) Msgs, USARMA Vientiane to ACSI, DA IN 230055, 15 May 62, DA IN 230748, 16 May 62, USARMA Bangkok to DA et al., DA IN 230591, 16 May 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 230163, 15 May 62; DA IN 229946, 15 May 62, DA IN 230672, 16 May 62; DA IN 231379, 17 May 62.

15 May 62 The British Ambassador to the US called upon Harriman to discuss Phoumi's status, No. 52 possible action by Co-Chairman MacDonald, and the American attitude toward SEATO Plan 5.

Ambassador Ormsby Gore expressed Lord Home's concern that a US attempt to replace Phoumi (see items 12 and 13 May 1962) would complicate future negotiations among the Lao factions. Harriman replied that the US was convinced that Phoumi's presence would destroy a government of national union. Thus, although replacing Phoumi might prolong negotiations, such a move would result in a stronger Lao Government. Harriman also pointed out that Phoumi, even after his departure from the political scene, would retain a purely military post and would participate in the military aspects of the negotiations.

Concerning possible action by the British Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, Harriman indicated that the US would study the Soviet response (see item 16 May 1962) to the American protest over the Nam Tha incident in an effort to determine how Co-Chairman MacDonald might prove useful.

When

When questioned about SEATO Plan 5, Harriman answered that the US moves in Thailand were not based upon this plan. This, moreover, was not the time to discuss the partition of Laos or other similar contingencies. Although bilateral US-UK military planning might be useful, the US did not want to plan on a SEATO basis, since such a course could lead to a misinterpretation of the objective of the deployment of forces to Thailand. Thus far, the US had done no more than ask SEATO members to contribute to precautionary moves.

(On 18 May, Ambassador Ormsby Gore, under instructions from Lord Home, again expressed to Harriman his Government's concern over the possible consequences of Phoumi's removal. Harriman replied by explaining that Phoumi might, as he had done in the past, disrupt the negotiations among the Princes. For this reason, it would be necessary to impress upon Phoumi that the deployment of US troops to Thailand did not indicate American support of him. The opportunity, which had been presented by the defeat at Nam Tha, of reducing Phoumi's dominant influence in the RLG should not be allowed to pass.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to London, 6124, 16 May 62, NIACT 6173, 18 May 62.

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Ambassador

15 May 62      Ambassador Brown, in an informal conversation, told Phoui Sananikone  
No. 53      that the US had lost all confidence in Phoumi and had decided to withhold all military and economic aid from any Lao Government dominated by him (see items 12 and 13 May 1962). The US, he continued, was taking certain military actions to fulfill obligations to Thailand and South Viet Nam and to impress the Soviets with the seriousness of the recent cease-fire violation. These measures, however, were not designed to show support of Phoumi.

Ambassador Brown also alluded to the possible reorganization of the RLG, a reorganization sufficiently drastic to oust Phoumi from control. He stated that such a reorganized government, willing to press ahead in negotiations with Souvanna, might be the best answer to the Lao problem. Phoui indicated that "if by taking some action he could help save his country from catastrophe" he would do so. He had, however, refused to accept the presidency of the National Assembly because that would in fact place him under Phoumi's control. Phoui suggested that the US should try convincing Phoumi that it still desired a Souvanna government and that Phoumi should proceed with negotiations. If  
the

the US continued to exert pressure, Phoui believed that Phoumi would negotiate sincerely. Ambassador Brown concluded by saying that nothing the US could do would convince Phoumi of its intentions.

In reporting the conversation, Brown informed the Secretary of State that he was encouraged by Phoui's apparent willingness to enter politics. As a result, the Secretary on 17 May ordered the Ambassador to determine what additional assurances Phoui desired from the US before he would assume a leading role in the RLG.

(On 16 May, Ambassador Brown made similar approaches to both King Savang and Foreign Minister Sisouk. Neither the removal of Phoumi nor the reorganization of the government appealed to the King, who charged that all Lao politicians, except possibly Souvanna, were insincere. The King then declared that, since Souvanna's mandate remained in effect, it was up to the Prince to form a government. If a reorganization were necessary, the King continued, the Assembly should take the initiative by showing its disapproval of the Boun Oum regime. Sisouk expressed confidence in Phoumi's sincerity, advised against a reorganization at this time, and said he would resign if Phoumi were dismissed.)

James

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1559, 15 May 62; 1569, 17 May 62 1573, 17 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 1013, 17 May 62.

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15 May 62 James Engers, acting as the personal representative of UN Secretary-General  
No. 54 U Thant, called on Assistant Secretary of State Harriman in order to discuss with him the most recent developments in Laos.

Engers conveyed the Secretary-General's assurances that, contrary to newspaper reports, he did not intend to take the Laos question to the Security Council and that he intended to discourage any RLG initiative in that direction. Mr. Engers also expressed U Thant's concern over the possibility that US troop movements might invite Chinese Communist response and would thus upset the tenuous prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Harriman explained for U Thant's benefit US policy in Laos, and asked that the Secretary-General be reassured that the US intended to continue its efforts toward reaching a peaceful political solution. He indicated that the US thought it essential that the Soviet re-establish the cease-fire and support the tripartite approach to a solution.

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(C) Msg, SecState to USUN, 2969, 16 May 62.

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President

15 May 62 President Kennedy and the Royal Thai Government issued separate statements No. 55 announcing the deployment of US troops to Thailand. By means of a White House press release, the President stated that he had acted at the invitation of the Thai Government in order to help insure the "territorial integrity of this peaceful country." The presence of US forces had become "desirable" because of recent Communist attacks in neighboring Laos and the subsequent advance of Communist forces toward the Thai border.

"A threat to Thailand," the President declared, "is of grave concern to the United States." Thus, he had chosen to deploy American forces so that the US would be in position to fulfill speedily its obligations under the Manila Pact, "a defense agreement which was approved overwhelmingly in the US Senate and to which the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of Thailand referred in the joint statement of March 6, 1962" (see item).

The military moves, President Kennedy continued, were purely defensive in character and thus consistent with the UN charter. The deployment, moreover, represented no change in US policy toward Laos, which continued to call for the re-establishment of an effective cease-fire

... and



and prompt negotiation toward the formation of a coalition government.

The Thai statement, issued the same day, emphasized that the US troops had been requested to help Thailand meet the definite threat to Thai security posed by the southwestward advance of Communist troops following the capture of Muong Sing and Nam Tha.

In explaining the diplomatic basis for its action, the Thai Government cited that provision of the Rusk-Thanat communique of 6 March 1962 in which the US had re-affirmed the vital importance of Thai independence and security and had expressed the "firm intention of aiding Thailand to resist Communist aggression and subversion." In keeping with the terms of the SEATO agreement, the Thai statement continued, the RTG had agreed to the stationing of US troops in Thailand.

(On 14 May, Ambassador Young had forwarded to the Secretary of State an English translation of a draft of the statement with which the RTG intended to announce the deployment of US forces to Thailand. This version declared that the American military moves were based on the Rusk-Thanat communique. The Secretary of State, however, had instructed Ambassador Young to seek Thai approval of a

US

US draft which avoided any mention of the  
communique and referred instead to the  
Manila Pact as the basis for the US action.

Upon receiving the Thai draft, the  
Secretary of State advised Young that  
it was "imperative that the March 6 Rusk-  
Thanat communique not be used as the basis  
for stationing US units in Thailand." The  
President, Secretary Rusk explained, wanted  
it made clear that he was acting under the  
terms of an agreement approved by the  
Senate rather than honoring an Executive  
arrangement to which the Congress had not  
been a party. The Secretary also  
proposed that certain language in the  
Thai statement be altered. Where the  
draft declared that Communist advances  
"mean" that the pro-Communists "seek"  
not only to control Laos but to expand  
beyond that kingdom, Secretary Rusk  
suggested the substitution of "indicate"  
and "may seek."

Thus, each nation's final statement  
differed from the earlier draft. The  
President referred to the Rusk-Thanat  
SEATO agreement, while the Thai Government  
mentioned the SEATO treaty as the means by  
which the pledges contained in the Rusk-  
Thanat communique were redeemed. The  
final Thai announcement, however, did not  
contain the changes in language suggested  
by the Secretary of State.)

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1769, 14 May 62. (S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1752, 14 May 62. NIACT 1753, 14 May 62. (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), pp. 904-905.

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15 May 62     The Deputy US Representative to the UN informed the Secretary-General that

No. 56     President Kennedy had ordered additional US forces to Thailand. The deployment had been judged necessary because of recent Communist attacks in Laos and the subsequent advance of Communist units toward the Thai border.

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(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), p 905.

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15, 19  
May 62

No. 57     The JCS on 15 May requested CINCPAC's assessment of the feasibility of holding the Laos Panhandle under two alternative assumptions: 1) that a coalition government was not established and the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh attacked the Panhandle, or 2) that a coalition government was established but was not able to stabilize the situation, and the PL and Viet Minh subsequently attacked the Panhandle. CINCPAC was to assume also that the US would support the RLG and FAR logistically and financially. His assessment should include consideration of the effectiveness of the following combination of forces:

1. FAR forces with only logistical and financial support from the US.

2. FAR

2. FAR and Thai forces.
3. FAR, Thai and South Vietnamese forces.
4. FAR, Thai and South Vietnamese forces, assisted by US forces holding Savannakhet, Pakse, and Thakhek, and by US tactical air support.

On 19 May 1962 CINCPAC replied to the JCS queries. According to CINCPAC, it would make little difference whether a Lao coalition government did or did not exist at the time of a Pathet Lao-Viet Minh attack on the Panhandle, for if an ineffective coalition did exist the US would simply have to work around it or ignore it. To CINCPAC, the more important consideration was the manner in which the FAR was employed. Supported by US money, airlift and equipment, the FAR would still flee from the Viet Minh, but if properly encadred by Thai or Vietnamese troops (approximately 1600, and probably Thai, given the present situation in Viet Nam) in addition to the 400 US Special Forces already in place, the FAR could be a military asset against the Communists.

Turning to the four specific combinations of forces proposed by the JCS, CINCPAC summarized as follows:

1. The FAR, with only financial and logistical support from the US, would lose the Panhandle.

2. With

2. With substantial Thai participation, the FAR could probably hold the Panhandle; the Thai, however, would probably not be willing to participate unless the US also sent troops into Laos.

3. Joint FAR-South Vietnamese-Thai operations without direct US participation were "difficult to conceive."

4. A US-FAR-South Vietnamese-Thai operation was "the winning combination," provided that the US forces were not prevented from using air power to destroy the Communist logistical system. The US could not, CINCPAC concluded, "[sit] back in rear areas in a supporting role, expecting local nationals of questionable military effectiveness to take objectives in forward areas and roll back the enemy."

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4561, 15 May 62; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 231908, 19 May 62.

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16 May 62    The Public Safety Division of the US AID Mission to Laos published the first

No. 58    revision of the Ryan Plan for reorganization, under US and French guidance, of the Lao National Police Force (LNP) (see item 21 August 1961). The revision, which represented a joint French-American planning effort (see items 27 November, 14 December 1961 and 27 January 1962) differed from the original plan principally

in

in that heavy weapons units had been eliminated from the police force proper in favor of a Gendarmerie within the Army, which would be called upon when the LNP needed help in quelling banditry and terrorism in strength.

The Public Safety Division felt that the plan could be of real benefit to a future RLG if the LNP could be constituted of well-trained and consequently well-respected Lao, and of particular value in rural areas where the influence of the central government had been notably lacking in the past

The revised plan assumed, as had the earlier version, that future Lao governments would be sufficiently friendly to the West to accept it. In contrast to its earlier form, however, the Ryan Plan now envisioned, as a "calculated risk," the acceptance of Pathet Lao into the police; but it continued to assert that the police should be loyal to the government and the King, rather than to any individual or political party. The plan emphasized, however, that the greatest internal security problems in Laos lay in the rural regions. Hence, the preponderance of police personnel would under the Ryan Plan be assigned to rural areas.

Before the program was put into effect, the Lao Government should

clearly

clearly understand, and agree in writing, that:

1. The LNP would be returned to the Ministry of Interior.
2. The LNP would re-acquire from the FAR as much as possible of the equipment provided it in the past by the US.
3. Effective budgetary and inventory control systems would be applied to funds and equipment for the LNP.
4. USAID auditors would perform end-use audits as necessary.
5. All payments of bills and contracts involving AID funds would be approved in writing by Director General, LNP, and the Chief, Public Safety Division, USAID, Laos.
6. In the event a Pathet Lao was appointed Minister of Interior, or in the event the entire coalition fell under Pathet Lao influence, the program would require radical readjustment or termination.
7. The future LNP would be able to operate throughout all of Laos, including areas now held by the Pathet Lao.
8. All police personnel now serving in or directly under Army control would be returned to the LNP.

(On 30 May, the Laos Country Team put its endorsement on the Ryan Plan by recommending that it be implemented after

a Lao

a Lao provisional government of national unity had been established )

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, D-215, 18 May 62, w/encl; on file in OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, A-117, 30 May 62.

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16 May 62 In the belief that recent developments had made necessary the immediate

No. 59 preparation of new defense plans for Thailand, the JCS requested CINCPAC to develop as soon as possible an outline plan that would take into account such factors as:

1. The increased Communist threat to the security of Thailand, through either insurgency or overt aggression.

2 The deployment of US forces to Thailand.

3. Existing Thai and SEATO plans. CINCPAC should assume, the JCS continued, that only Thai and US forces would be available initially and that within this framework Thailand would participate to the maximum extent.

(On 26 May, having in hand the recommendations of COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC forwarded such an outline plan to the JCS.)

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(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4671, 16 May 62. COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC, 241103Z May 62. CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 234034, 26 May 62. CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, 290419Z May 62.

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In an



16 May 62 In an interview appearing in Le Monde,  
Souvanna expressed his confidence that  
No. 60 his mission to Laos would be successful,  
provided that US troops did not intervene  
in Laos. He explained that the term  
"intervention" embraced the encadrement  
of the FAR. Souvanna attributed recent  
military moves by the PL to the provocation  
of RLG troops. He denied Chinese influence  
on the PL, and indicated that the PL was  
still ready to compromise. He went on  
to say that recent events had left Prince  
Souphanouvong and him in complete accord.  
Souvanna concluded the interview by expressing  
his opposition to a partition of Laos.

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(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-2131, 17 May 62.

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16 May 62 Answering questions raised on 9 May by  
Assistant Secretary of State Harriman in  
No. 61 an effort to determine whether the fall of  
Nam Tha indicated a change in Soviet policy  
toward Laos, Ambassador Dobrynin officially  
replied that his government believed "now  
as formerly" that it was necessary to solve  
as soon as possible the Laotian problem by  
the formation of a coalition government  
and the signing of the agreement being  
worked out at the Geneva conference. The  
US, therefore, should force the RLG to  
stop its sabotaging of these efforts to  
negotiate and its systematic provocations  
undertaken in violation of the cease-fire.

The Secretary

The Secretary of State told Dobrynin that the attack on Nam Tha raised the following possibilities, all most disturbing to the US: 1) the attack was an effort to take advantage of the situation. 2) it meant that the USSR did not retain its former influence on Laos and someone else was responsible; or 3) perhaps the PL was making military decisions without the knowledge of the USSR. Because of these many uncertainties, the US had taken two steps: it had raised the question of Soviet policy toward Laos, and it had taken precautionary measures, including the movement of US troops to Thailand.

Ambassador Dobrynin replied that the USSR would regard the movement of US troops as a very serious step, and his government did not believe the US was doing all it could in influencing Phoumi. The Secretary explained that lacking Soviet assurances to the contrary, the US could not take additional steps against Phoumi which would open the way for further PL advances. If the cease-fire were maintained and there were a demonstration of intent by a pull-back of PL troops from the Thai border, the Secretary was sure negotiations would start soon in Laos and Phoumi would be prepared to negotiate realistically.

Following

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1006,  
16 May 62.

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16 May 62      Following Boun Oum's visit to Taipei, in  
which he called for a strengthening of  
No. 62      the bonds of friendship between the GRC  
and RLG, GRC Vice Foreign Minister Chu  
informed Ambassador Clough that the Lao  
and Chinese Governments had announced the  
establishment of full diplomatic relations.  
The US Ambassador expressed regret at  
this decision and reminded Chu that  
various Asian states had joined the US  
in urging Boun Oum to cooperate in forming  
a Lao coalition. Chu replied that the  
GRC had consistently followed a policy of  
establishing diplomatic relations with  
as many nations as possible. Ties between  
Nationalist China and the RLG were  
especially important because Communist  
China had accredited a consul general to  
the Souvanna Government and also had  
established economic and cultural missions.

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(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 788, 8 May  
62. (C) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 825, 16 May  
62. (U) Msgs, Taipei to SecState, 810, 14 May  
62, 824, 16 May 62.

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16 May 62      Ambassador Brown informed the British and  
French Ambassadors of US plans to eliminate  
No. 63      Phoumi from the Lao political scene and  
reorganize the RLG (see item 12 May 1962).  
The French Ambassador admitted sharing US  
views

views concerning Phoumi but believed nothing should be done to delay the negotiations. The British agreed with the French and added that reorganization would simply introduce a new element of confusion and delay and might be impossible to bring about. Moreover, the PL was likely to be suspicious of reorganization, considering it a ruse to gain further delay. (See item 17 May 1962.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1570, 16 May 62.

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16 May 62 Ambassador Young informed the Secretary of State that Thai officials, though apparently  
No. 64 unaware of Ambassador Brown's suggestion that Phoumi be replaced (see item 13 May 1962), believed, as a result of speculation in the American press, that the US was thinking of eliminating Phoumi and Boun Oum from the existing RLG. Sarit and his advisers suspected that the Nam Tha debacle might have been a deliberate attempt to "suck in" US and Thai forces. They feared, moreover, the possible results of Phoumi's apparent intention to seek the partition of Laos. Thus, because Sarit in particular had lost confidence in Phoumi, the Ambassador believed that the Thai Government might give discreet assistance to any attempt to reorganize  
the RLG

the RLG, and he requested guidance concerning this possibility.

In response to Young's request, Secretary Rusk said that the RTG should be made aware of the US conviction that, for the sake of both Thailand and the US, Phoumi should be removed from the RLG. If Sarit chose to assist in this effort, Young was to offer encouragement and extend cooperation.

The Secretary also advised Ambassador Gavin in Paris that Souvanna should be informed that the Thai Government did not desire US forces to cross the Mekong. Gavin, however, was not to mention Sarit's suspicion that the retreat from Nam Tha had been staged by Phoumi to force the US and Thailand to intervene.

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1788, 16 May 62. State to Bangkok, PRIORITY 1785, to Paris, PRIORITY 6161, 16 May 62.

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16-17  
May 62

No. 65

The Marine BLT, its helicopters, the Marine attack squadron, and the Air Force F-100 squadron ordered to Thailand (see item 13 May 1962) arrived at their planned locations. In addition, the Army Battle Group already in Thailand redeployed to its authorized location. (See item 22 May 1962.)

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to AIG 930, 160343Z May 62. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 162351Z May 62.

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A Joint

17 May 62

[REDACTED] authority  
No. 66 had been granted for the organization and equipment of 12 additional Kha guerrilla companies thus bringing the total authorized strength of the units to 24 (see item 2 May 1962).

[REDACTED]

17 May 62

No. 67 The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to obtain the support of "Addis and other colleagues" in reducing Phoumi's influence in the RLG (see items 12 and 13 May 1962), even at the expense of some delay in the three-party negotiations. The US believed that a slight delay now was preferable to putting up with Phoumi's obstructionist tactics during the negotiations. The US continued to be in full agreement, however, with efforts to achieve early negotiations, and desired a quick, affirmative RLG response to Souvanna's request for another meeting. Although the US was determined to prevent Phoumi's participating in the three-Prince meetings as the leading RLG political negotiator, Phoumi would remain an important participant in the military area. Once it became clear that Phoumi had irrevocably lost US support, his importance in Laos would "disappear."

The US

17 May 62 Ambassador Brown cautioned the Secretary of State against assuming that either  
No. 68 Souvanna or Souphanouvong would necessarily welcome Phoui as a replacement for Phoumi in the coalition government (see item 13 May 1962). Both the British and French Ambassadors agreed with Brown that the bulk of the evidence seemed to indicate that the contrary was more probable. Brown noted several factors which had influenced this conclusion:  
1) neither Souvanna nor Souphanouvong had the same personal antipathy toward Phoumi that each had toward Phoui; 2) both had repeatedly stated their desire to include Phoumi in the coalition to prevent him from making trouble on the outside, and 3) both would probably suspect that the US was keeping Phoumi out of the coalition in order to prepare him for future moves against the government.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1577, 17 May 62.

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17 May 62 The Secretary of State outlined US intentions in Laos following the fall of Nam Tha. In  
No. 69 particular, the Secretary believed it important to inform the Communists by action and message of US intentions, and to specify under what circumstances the US would consider withdrawing its additional military forces deployed in SEA. The Secretary assumed that the rapid and  
significant

significant US military reaction to Nam Tha had prevented the Communists from making further attacks against strategic points and from massive action to exploit and physically invest the northwest territory opened by the FAR rout.

It remained, however, to re-establish the general territorial pattern which had existed in Laos since the cease-fire had been declared. Since the Zurich communique of June 1961, the Soviets had indicated that, during the period of provisional government, Communist forces would be confined to those areas of Laos over which they exercised de facto control at the time of the cease-fire. The US should therefore encourage the RLG to recoup as much northwest Laos as it could. Secretary Rusk instructed Ambassador Brown to inform ICC Chairman Singh of US intentions in order to minimize the risks involved in the RLG's reinvesting operation. Furthermore, he wanted the Communists informed as soon as possible through the Polish Commissioner.

Secretary Rusk suggested that the ICC might also be helpful in releasing Nam Tha from Communist control. Ideally, the village should be reoccupied by the FAR, and Singh should be requested to approach



approach Souphanouvong to obtain the necessary consent. It was highly unlikely, however, that the Communists would allow an RLG reoccupation of Nam Tha, but they might accept the principle of an open city. In any event, it was highly desirable to engage Singh and the ICC mechanism in a continuing and consistent effort to restore the cease-fire and to provide a sanction for the restoration of the territorial status quo ante in the remainder of northwest Laos.

On the same day Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary that Singh had shown no surprise or made no objection to the idea of an RLG reinvestment operation in northwest Laos. Singh had agreed with Brown that the Polish Commissioner should not be informed of any possible military moves at this time since he could warn the PL who could easily mobilize a force superior to the advancing RLG column. Singh believed the RLG could not recapture Nam Tha but agreed that the proposal for making the village an "open city" was excellent. He promised to urge this on Souphanouvong after first presenting it to Souvanna.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1575.  
and SecState to Vientiane, 1007, 17 May 62.

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Anticipating

17-24  
May 62

No. 70

Anticipating that the arrival of other SEATO contingents in Thailand (see items 14 and 31 May 1962) would raise questions of command arrangements, CINCPAC on 17 May suggested to COMUSMACTHAI that the US act as a "coordinator" of forces, so that the various SEATO forces and the Thai forces would not clash or interfere with each other. CINCPAC opposed the adoption of the command arrangements of SEATO Plan 5, under which Sarit would become the Force Commander with either COMUSMACTHAI or CJTF-116 as his subordinate Field Forces Commander. Such an arrangement, CINCPAC held, would not allow the US the flexibility needed in the current situation.

During the following week, it became clear that the Thai, too, preferred to avoid the formal invocation of a SEATO plan, since they arranged that UK and Australian contingents be brought to Thailand under the same formula that authorized the US forces (see item 15 May 1962). Consequently, on 24 May, COMUSMACTHAI informed CINCPAC that, although he would have preferred some operational control of the SEATO nations' forces in Thailand, he would accept the role of "coordinator" as the only presently feasible arrangement.

(On 6 June

(On 6 June, military representatives from the participating nations formally approved COMUSMACTHAI's role as "coordinator" of their forces in Thailand.)

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(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, 171006Z May 62; CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 231320, 17 May 62. (S) Msgs, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, DA IN 232741, 22 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1812 and 1814, 21 May 62; SecState to Bangkok 1817, 21 May 62; COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC, DA IN 233226, 24 May 62. USMILADREP, SMPO, Bangkok to CINCPAC, 080130Z Jun 62.

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18 May 62      Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State the assurances Phoui would demand before joining a reorganized RLG (see item 13 May 1962). Phoui told Brown that he would expect a senior post in the new government, at least a deputy premiership of equal rank with Phoumi. Although he would accept the "inoffensive" Boun Oum as Prime Minister, Phoui demanded the inclusion of one or two of his followers in senior positions thereby insuring his influence in the reorganized government.

Phoui suggested to Ambassador Brown that in view of Souvanna's expected return to Laos it would be best to allow the RLG to continue in power. If Phoumi remained intransigent it would quickly become apparent, and Phoui could then spur the National Assembly into criticizing Phoumi's failure to negotiate sincerely with Souvanna. Phoui believed a reorganization impossible

impossible without the consent of Phoumi, who controlled the military and a majority of the deputies. A revolt in the National Assembly was impossible unless the security of the deputies could be assured, a pledge which Ambassador Brown said the US could not give.

Although the US wished to avoid giving Phoumi an opportunity to wreck the negotiations, Phoui refused to act until after Phoumi, as chief negotiator, had demonstrated his intransigence. Until then, Phoui would not approach the King, Boun Oum, or Phoumi on the subject of reorganization.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1582, 18 May 62.

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18 May 62      In a lengthy conversation with General Phoumi, Ambassador Brown was able to reach

No. 72      the following conclusions which Phoumi agreed might be officially reported to Washington:

1) Phoumi would go to the Plaine des Jarres for a tripartite meeting if Souvanna first went to see the King, preferably in Luang Prabang; 2) future talks must be on a three-Prince basis and should be pursued as quickly as possible; 3) Phoumi would demand only two assurances from Souvanna and Souphanouvong -- unanimous tripartite decisions on all important Defense and Interior points, and the maintenance of

tripartite

tripartite forces pending agreement on integration; 4) discussion of Nam Tha would not be raised as a pre-condition to any further tripartite discussion; and 5) approval for this plan of action would be requested at a 19 or 20 May cabinet meeting. Phoumi also promised full collaboration with MAAG on military matters.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1580, 18 May 62.

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18 May 62      On leaving Paris for Laos, Souvanna sent a message to Secretary Rusk in which he

No. 73      expressed the hope that Phoumi and Boun Oum would finally agree to accept a coalition government. Souvanna warned, however, that if they made more difficulties, he intended to return to Paris. Whatever the attitude of the RLG, he nevertheless intended to return to Paris in time for his daughter's wedding on 28 June. He concluded by saying that he hoped that Rusk would be able to induce Phoumi-Boun Oum to cooperate.

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5480, 19 May 62.

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18 May 62      M. Manac'h told Ambassador Gavin that the French Government was reluctant to make

NO 74      a contribution to the Western forces in Thailand, primarily because of evidence that the Communists did not intend to expand their offensive operations in

Southeast

Southeast Asia at the present time.

The Foreign Office also indicated its disappointment over: 1) the failure of the US to consult with France prior to its committing troops to Thailand; 2) the US appointment of General Harkins to command in both Thailand and SVN at the same time; and 3) the US proposal to reorganize the RLG at this time.

Ambassador Gavin also learned that the Foreign Office had told the Thai Foreign Minister that France did not in any way disapprove of the US policy of sending troops to Thailand, but that the French Government felt that the sending of French forces would not have a constructive effect.

(On 28 May, Manac'h informed Ambassador Gavin that the Government of France, though it did not disapprove of the US deployment of forces to Thailand, would not participate in any such venture. France objected on the grounds that the move was provocative and might imperil the future status of the French Military Mission to Laos. For a list of those nations that did participate, see item 31 May 1962.)

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(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5464, 18 May 62. (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5705, 28 May 62.

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CHMAAG

18 May 62 CHMAAG tried to persuade Phoumi to move a fresh battalion to Ban Houie Sai.

No. 75 CHMAAG envisioned this battalion moving toward Nam Tha to determine the enemy's whereabouts and to retake, without combat, as much ground as possible. Phoumi agreed with the military wisdom of CHMAAG's plan, but he refused to deploy the troops, saying that political considerations were overriding. "One step up the Nam Tha road" would be considered an aggressive act by the enemy, it would upset the new negotiations for a political settlement, and would be repulsed by a superior force from Nam Tha. In brief, Phoumi wanted to "initiate no action whatsoever in that area other than to cooperate in the defense of Ban Houie Sai." The MAAG Chief warned Phoumi that unless the probe toward Nam Tha was made, the US would refuse to re-equip the Nam Tha evacuees; but Phoumi did not change his stand.

At the same meeting, CHMAAG agreed to help Phoumi in reorganizing the FAR. In addition he told the Lao leader that the FAR officer corps should be revamped. CHMAAG told Phoumi among other things, that Bounleut, the FAR commander, "could not lead a squad around the corner and should be relieved."

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 231608, 18 May 62.

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The State

~~TOP SECRET~~  
13-22  
May 62

No. 76

The State Department informed the US Embassy in Taipei of concern at the "highest levels" over reports (see item 12 May 1962) which indicated that the Nationalist Chinese Government was considering renewing support to the remnants of KMT irregulars in Southeast Asia, including Burma. The Department informed the Ambassador that any renewal of contact with the KMT irregulars by the Government of the Republic of China would be considered by the US as a flagrant breach of faith which would require the US Government to re-examine the whole basis of US relations with the GRC.

On the 17th the Department requested that the US Embassy in Taipei advise the [REDACTED] to inform the responsible Chinese official, Chiang Ching-kuo, that he was mistaken if he believed that the US would agree to the use of Chinese irregulars to support RLG forces. The main effect of such action, the Department pointed out, would be to justify Chinese Communist intervention.

After discussing the question [REDACTED] Ambassador Clough reported that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] satisfied that Chiang understood US policy and would not resume support of the irregulars. The Ambassador also indicated that he did not think that



that any responsible GRC official believed that the irregulars were of any military value, or that Laos and adjacent areas could be used successfully as a springboard for an attack on Communist China. The Ambassador characterized the reports regarding the use of the Chinese irregulars as the "harebrained" notion of low-ranking civilians who had no access to responsible GRC views.

The Ambassador concluded his views on the problem of the Chinese irregulars by saying that, though it was useful to remind Chiang Ching-kuo from time to time of the US position in regard to the use of the irregulars, as long as President Chiang had hopes of securing US cooperation in an action against the mainland, he would be unlikely to jeopardize these hopes by attempting to use the KMT remnants.

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(S) Msg, SecState to Taipei, 657, 18 May 62.  
(C) Msg, SecState to Taipei, 662, 19 May 62.  
(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 864, 22 May 62.

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19 May 62 Lord Home spoke with Souvanna, who had paused in Britain while en route via Burma to Laos. During their conversation, the British Foreign Secretary emphasized the importance of Souvanna's remaining in Laos until an agreement was reached. Lord

Home

Home informed the Prince that Phoumi had agreed to attend a meeting of the Princes on the Plaine des Jarres. Other points mentioned were the US attitude toward Phoumi, the importance of maintaining the cease-fire, and the purpose of the deployment of US troops to Thailand.

In response to Lord Home's comments, Souvanna stated that he realized the importance of his presence in Laos. He indicated, however, that he intended to return to Paris in time for the wedding of his daughter on 28 June. The Prince agreed that, though Phoumi should be present at the negotiations, a more reliable person, preferably Leuam Insisiengmay, should eventually replace him. Turning to the composition of the cabinet, Souvanna said that his faction would retain the ministries of Defense and Interior, both of which would be subject to the Troika principle. The political portfolios of Education and Information and the technical posts of Economics and Finance should be divided equally between left and right. Souvanna also mentioned that he had requested an appointment with the King.

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(S) Msg, London to SecState, 4273, 19 May 62. (C) Msg, London to SecState, 4253, 18 May 62.

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Harriman

19 May 62 Harriman, in an interview with the Lao Ambassador, called for the establishment of a reorganized RLG dedicated to a resumption of the tripartite negotiations, and in which Phoumi would be excluded from any political role (see items 12 and 13 May 1962). After explaining the role of US troops in Thailand, he also informed the Ambassador that there was no plan for US intervention in Laos and that the US certainly would not consider dispatching forces to help Phoumi. Harriman also denied that any negotiations were being conducted that would lead to a partition of Laos. Ambassador Khampan commented that it would be difficult to achieve Assembly approval for a governmental reorganization since many of the deputies were followers of Phoumi who did not hold him responsible for the Nam Tha defeat.

The next day Ambassador Brown informed the State Department that Ambassador Khampan's report of Harriman's remarks came as a "bombshell" to the RLG and caused a "very violent reaction in all quarters." Brown reported that the RLG had just agreed to follow US advice in all respects, including surrendering the Defense and Interior posts to Souvanna. All was now in danger of being lost, the RLG must either resist US advice

advice or resign. Foreign Minister Sisouk told Brown that the resignation of the RLG would result in chaos. Brown recommended that he be authorized to urge Phoumi's presence at the tripartite meetings. Only if Phoumi obstructed the progress of the negotiations should the US force him to resign.

Harriman answered that nothing in his conversation with Ambassador Khampan should be interpreted as a demand for the RLG's resignation or even of Phoumi's dismissal from the Ministry of Defense. The US wished to see Phoumi accompany Premier Boun Oum to the tripartite meetings along with "capable political advisers." Harriman also instructed the Ambassador that Brown might wish to inform Phoumi that the future US attitude depended upon Phoumi's present and future actions.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1020, 19 May 62, 1022; 20 May 62, Vientiane to SecState, 1505 and 1586, 20 May 62.

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21 May 62      Souvanna, who had paused in Rangoon en route to Laos, met with the US Ambassador  
No. 79      to Burma. The Prince, during a brief conversation, expressed concern lest the Thai Government take advantage of the presence of US troops and attempt to provoke an incident which would lead to combat

combat between American and Pathet Lao forces. According to Souvanna, the Nam Tha attack had been conducted in retaliation for aggressive actions by the FAR. The Prince also urged that the US continue to exert pressure on Phoumi.

The Ambassador replied that Thailand, which endorsed US policy toward Laos, would not take any action that would jeopardize the stability of the situation in Southeast Asia. The deployment of troops to Thailand had been carried out at the request of the Thai Government, was based on both the SEATO agreement and the Rusk-Thanat understanding (see item 6 March 1962), and was in accord with the UN charter. US policy, moreover, had not changed, for the objective remained an independent and neutral Laos ruled by a coalition government under Souvanna's leadership.

Following this conversation with Ambassador Everton, Souvanna attended a gathering at the US Embassy. Also present were the French and British Ambassadors and a representative of the Burmese Foreign Office. The Prince stated that he would not be able to assess the prospects for agreement on a coalition until he had talked with Phoumi and Boun Oum. Furthermore, the decision (see item 22

June

June 1961) to leave undisturbed, prior to a general election, the local administrative machinery in areas controlled by the Pathet Lao had complicated Souvanna's task of unifying the kingdom. In effect, the Pathet Lao had thus been given additional time in which to indoctrinate the inhabitants. Laos, the Prince continued, could not remain neutral unless the people so desired.

The Communist Chinese and Viet Minh, Souvanna declared, sincerely desired a neutral and peaceful Laos. He based this conviction on a belief that the Chinese wanted a respite of from 10 to 15 years and would not antagonize the West during this period. While China rested, Laos would become stronger and more closely unified.

The Prince, however, returned to the subject of Thailand, charging this time that the Thai Government was supporting Chinese Nationalist guerrillas operating in Burmese territory. Souvanna rejected Ambassador Everton's assurances to the contrary, for, according to the Prince, Sarit could not be trusted and Phoumi was merely the Thai Premier's puppet.

In commenting upon Souvanna's remarks at the Embassy, the US Ambassador observed that

that the Prince seemed convinced that Communist China and North Viet Nam sincerely desired a neutral Laos. This conviction was in keeping with Souvanna's view that the FAR had provoked the Nam Tha incident. In addition, the Prince appeared "obsessed with his dislike of Sarit" and therefore unwilling to cooperate with the Thai Government.

(During subsequent conversations with members of the French diplomatic mission to Burma, Souvanna indicated that his success in forming a coalition would depend upon the suspension of US military support to Phoumi. The Prince also admitted that he was running out of funds, but he declared that he had refused financial aid from the Communists.)

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(S) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 851, 21 May 62 855, 22 May 62, 863, 25 May 62.

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21-22  
May 62

No. 80

Sarit summoned Ambassador Young and expressed alarm and shock at the contents of a message sent to him on the previous day by Phoumi. Thanat then disclosed that Phoumi had claimed that the US Ambassador to Laos had been instructed to present Boun Oum with the choice of either dismissing Phoumi and forming a new government or forfeiting all US aid. Should Boun Oum retain Phoumi

in the

in the cabinet, the US would refuse to give any assistance in the event of further Communist aggression. Sarit requested that Young find out as soon as possible if the US Government had actually made so drastic a decision.

The Thai Prime Minister then warned that the adoption of this policy would render meaningless the informal agreement which Sarit had negotiated with Phoumi (see item 1-4 May 1962). If, however, Phoumi's report proved false, Sarit would be willing to "tell him bluntly" to cooperate with the Americans, particularly in military matters. The Prime Minister also offered to train additional Lao soldiers, provided the US established a satisfactory relationship with Phoumi and the FAR.

After pointing out that Phoumi's telegram was wrong on several counts, Young explained that the US had lost confidence in Phoumi's military ability and for that reason believed that his status should be changed. Phoumi had, in fact, agreed to cooperate fully with his American advisers, for he understood that if he did otherwise the US would not assist him in re-equipping and reorganizing the FAR. Moreover, the US, in addition to entertaining doubts concerning Phoumi's military skills, also suspected



suspected that he "could and probably would" sabotage the negotiations with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. Thus, it was considered necessary that other responsible Lao be brought into the RLG to insure progress toward the rapid formation of a coalition government.

Ambassador Young told Sarit and Thanat that the US did not intend to eliminate Phoumi from the political and military scene and therefore assumed that he would participate, in a proper manner, both in the negotiations among the Princes and "thereafter in some way." The Thai officials argued that the US had assured them that Phoumi would play a key role in any coalition government and that this assurance had enabled them to convince Phoumi to take part in a Souvanna government. Young, however, avoided stating whether the US would agree to retaining Phoumi as Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister in the Boun Oum government and, in general, refused to comment on Phoumi's future.

Secretary Rusk, in commenting upon Young's account of this conversation with Sarit, stated that Phoumi obviously was trying to create support among Thai officials by means of an exaggerated account of the pressures being exerted upon him

upon him by the US Government. Although the Secretary believed that the statements made to Sarit by Young had been helpful, he did not want the Ambassador to offer explanations which might weaken the effect of US efforts to obtain military and political cooperation from Phoumi. In addition, Rusk said that any efforts by Sarit to gain Phoumi's military cooperation would be welcome.

On 22 May, Ambassador Young, acting upon guidance received since his earlier interview with Sarit, again informed the Prime Minister that Phoumi's account of US policy had been exaggerated. After reviewing the reasons for his Government's lack of confidence in Phoumi, the Ambassador explained that, if the FAR was to counterbalance the Pathet Lao in a unified Laos, Phoumi would have to concentrate on military matters and cooperate fully with CHMAAG Laos. Thus, the US Government would welcome Sarit's initiative in obtaining Phoumi's cooperation, particularly in military matters.

Turning to that portion of his instructions that dealt with political problems, Young called Sarit's attention to the urgent need to incorporate into the RLG the "most responsible and wisest advisers possible," so that the

Lao

Lao Government might negotiate realistically regarding the formation of a coalition and the distribution of key cabinet portfolios. The US Government assumed, however, that the existing RLQ cabinet would remain essentially intact, with Phoumi holding an important position, preferably military, and participating with Boun Oum in future meetings of the Princes.

Sarit accepted the Ambassador's explanation and dictated an urgent telegram informing Phoumi of the US position. The "tricky point" of the future relationship between Phoumi and the US Government was not raised. The Prime Minister did, however, disclose that he had on the previous day cabled Phoumi to concentrate on being a soldier and to cooperate with General Tucker and Ambassador Brown. Because he believed that the FAR was incapable of providing its own training cadres, Sarit also urged that the US training program be stepped up and that more Lao be indoctrinated in Thailand.

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1813, 21 May 62, 1829, 22 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1816, 21 May 62.

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22 May 62      CINCPAC requested that COMUSMACTHAI restrict  
No. 81          overflights of Laos by US aircraft under  
his command

his command to: 1) reconnaissance and supply missions requested by CHMAAG Laos, 2) flights to and from the Philippines requiring overflight of southern Laos, and 3) administrative flights to Vientiane.

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, DA IN 232500, 22 May 62.

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22 May 62 CHMAAG, still unable to persuade any Lao to accompany the advance White Star  
No. 82 team in its mission of making contact with the enemy (see item 14-17 May 1962), proposed to CINCPAC that the WSMITT undertake such a reconnaissance by itself.

In a message of the same day, CINCPAC refused permission for this undertaking, stating that the situation was too "delicate" for any action that could be construed as a US probe or advance party. CINCPAC did not, however, preclude joint US-FAR patrols if CHMAAG could get any Lao to participate. (See item 25-28 May 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 232578, 22 May 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 232557, 22 May 62.

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22 May 62 As of this date, approximately 6,000 of the approximately 9,000 US troops ordered to  
No. 83 Thailand (see item 13 May 1962) were in that country. The troops not yet on hand were principally Army and Air Force supporting units.

(During

(During the remainder of May,  
no further appreciable numbers of  
troops arrived in Thailand. See item  
26 June 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 240026Z May  
62, 300232Z May 62.

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23 May 62 According to USARMA Bangkok, the Royal  
Thai Army (RTA) had moved several  
No. 84 companies and one battalion to the Lao-Thai  
border area, as requested by the US (see  
item 13 May 1962).

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(S) Msg, USARMA Bangkok to DA, DA IN  
233012, 23 May 62.

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24 May 62 The Chairman, JCS, urged CHMAAG Laos to  
continue pressuring Phoumi to improve  
No. 35 FAR leadership, morale, effectiveness, and  
responsiveness to US advice (see item  
13 May 1962). CJCS hoped that by such  
improvement the anti-Communist elements  
of future Lao governments would have  
a stronger FAR as a bulwark against the  
extension of Communist influence. CHMAAG  
was asked to prepare a list of "simply-  
stated, easily verifiable immediate  
actions," that the RLG should take.  
Finally, both CINCPAC and CHMAAG were  
granted authority to regulate the flow  
of MAP material into Laos, in order to  
put additional pressure on Phoumi to follow  
CHMAAG's recommendations. (See item 6 June  
1962.)

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(S) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4757,  
24 May 62.

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24 May 62     Since a new rupture of the Lao cease-fire  
                 seemed possible, the President at a White  
No. 86     House meeting requested that contingency  
                 planning be undertaken for: 1) the  
                 investing and holding of Sayaboury Province  
                 by Thai forces with US support; and 2) the  
                 holding of the Panhandle by the FAR with  
                 Thai, South Vietnamese, or US forces.  
                 In connection with this planning, the  
                 President also desired an estimate of the  
                 military value of the Mekong River in  
                 Sayaboury Province as a defensive barrier  
                 in relation to the cost of taking and  
                 holding it (see item 25 May 1962). All  
                 this planning, the President emphasized,  
                 was to be done unilaterally by the US,  
                 without discussion with the Lao or Thai.

                 Finally the President indicated that  
                 he intended to keep US forces in Thailand  
                 during the three-Prince negotiation and  
                 the early days of the government of  
                 national union--in other words, "as  
                 long as they serve a necessary purpose."

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(TS) JCS 2344/47, 25 May 62; (C) 1st  
N/H of JCS 2344/47, 5 Jun 62, in JMF 9150/  
3100 (24 May 62).

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24 May 62     Since the deployment of US troops to  
                 Thailand was all but completed, and because  
No. 87     the Thai Government was inviting similar  
                 action

action by SEATO forces, Ambassador Young believed it necessary that he raise four policy questions which might be the subjects of further Departmental guidance or additional contingency planning. The Ambassador, however, in his message to the Secretary of State, listed only the following questions:

- 1) the "right bank problem", 2) a further violation by the Communists of the cease-fire, and 3) the withdrawal of US forces.

The right bank problem. Because the Thai Government was concerned lest the Communists control that part of Sayaboury Province west of the Mekong, the Ambassador feared that the Thai might send troops into Laos to defend this area. The RTG, Young continued, might either undertake a preventive occupation or arrange with the RLG for the passage of Thai troops if it appeared that Communist units were entrenching themselves along the Mekong's east bank or preparing to infiltrate across the river. The Ambassador suggested that guidance should be prepared to cover this eventuality.

Further breaches of the cease-fire by Communist troops. The Ambassador believed that higher US authorities should consider the possibility of  
another

another Communist offensive, such as had occurred at Nam Tha, and issue guidance concerning the actions which he and General Harkins should take to meet Thai pressure for the employment of US troops in Laos. Since this was an "extremely tricky and difficult question," Young realized that it might not be feasible to issue instructions at the present time.

The withdrawal of US troops. For political and military planning purposes, Young suggested a "confidential working assumption" that the American units would withdraw in 90 days. Once the situation had become stabilized, the Ambassador continued, the US should revert to a planned, rotational, training cycle, under which the first contingents would be replaced, at least in part, by similar units. The US Ambassador also observed that the Thai Government, though reluctant to have US forces permanently stationed in the country, would certainly want some US units on hand for the time being and might even desire the permanent presence of foreign troops under SEATO auspices.

(On 25 May, Under Secretary Ball informed the Ambassador that "highest authority" had directed that there be no bilateral US-Thai planning for the possible



possible movement of Thai forces into Laos. For the present, the US would engage only in unilateral planning concerning the possible further deterioration of the military situation in Laos. The JCS would so instruct Admiral Felt, General Harkins, and General Tucker.

In a second message sent that day, Under Secretary Ball pointed out that the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand would have to be "characterized by maximum flexibility." For purposes of confidential planning, the Ambassador was told that at least some of the US forces would remain until satisfactory progress had been made toward the establishment of a Lao coalition, the withdrawal from the kingdom of foreign military forces, and the integration and demobilization of Lao armed forces. Thus, the troops might remain for as long as six months.)

(See item 4 June 1962.)

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1844, 24 May 62. (TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1849, 25 May 62; 1855, 25 May 62.

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25 May 62 Pursuant to the President's 24 May requests (see item), the JCS asked CINCPAC and

No. 88 COMUSMACTHAI to comment upon the necessity or desirability of the Thai occupying Sayaboury Province in the event the Lao

cease-fire

cease-fire collapsed. The US commanders were also requested to present their concepts for such a Thai occupation, and for the occupation of the Lao Panhandle after the cease-fire had been violated. Several specific questions were presented for the commanders' replies, and several specific topics were presented for inclusion in their respective concepts of operation.

As background for CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI in formulating their replies, the JCS expressed judgments on certain pertinent issues:

1. The JCS agreed with opinions from the field that the FAR could not effectively resist any determined enemy attack at any major point, and that Thakhek, Sayaboury, and Attapeu were particularly vulnerable points that could be held by the FAR for only 48 hours.

2. The JCS believed that measures to strengthen the FAR, "within the limits of existing policy," while desirable, would have only limited effect. Even with maximum assistance--large scale Thai encadrement, US helicopter and Jungle Jim support, and a substantial increase in US advisers--the FAR would still require Thai and probably US tactical air support to hold threatened points indefinitely.

3. The

3. The JCS felt that introduction of US forces for the sole purpose of holding key river towns would probably lead to a "creeping" Pathet Lao-Viet Minh response. US forces confined to these towns would make no real contribution to the recovery of Laos, the defense of Thailand, or the destruction of Viet Cong routes into South Viet Nam.

(See item 29, 31 May 1962.)

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, COMUSMACTHAI, JCS 4790, 25 May 62.

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25 May 62 Souvanna, accompanied by Quinlan Pholsena, arrived at Plaine des Jarres. Souvanna  
No. 89 informed the Canadian ICC observer at Khang Khay that he was most anxious to meet with the British Ambassador in order to be informed of the situation in Vientiane.

During a meeting with Ambassador Addis on the following day, Souvanna declared that if no agreement were reached by 15 June he would return to Paris.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1608, 25 May 62. and 1612, 26 May 62.

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25 May 62 Soviet Premier Khrushchev, in a TV-Radio talk following his visit to Bulgaria,  
No. 90 spoke at length on the Laotian situation. In regard to the arrival of American forces in Thailand, Khrushchev confined himself to noting that the American action seriously

~~TOP SECRET~~

seriously complicated efforts to arrive at a settlement of the Laotian problem. Khrushchev once again repeated the Soviet desire for an independent and neutral Laos.

(See item 27 May 1962.)

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(LOU) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 3067, 25 May 62.

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25-29  
May 62

No. 91

A patrol of 26 FAR and 4 US personnel finally made contact with the enemy some 35 kilometers northeast of Ban Houie Sai on 25 May. They were attacked by a force of 100-150 Pathet Lao and, with the FAR soldiers fighting "exceptionally well," withdrew 5 kilometers to their prepared defensive positions (see item 14-17 May 1962) with the PL in aggressive pursuit.

On 27 May, these defensive positions, defended by about 75 US and Lao personnel, were attacked by Viet Minh troops, and despite one reinforcement by helicopter, the defenders were forced to withdraw. In this encounter the FAR troops had no fight in them at all, because the attackers were Viet Minh.

The enemy attacked the defenses on the outskirts of Ban Houie Sai itself on 28 May. Although only ten rounds of mortar fire and a dozen attackers were reported, the FAR commander and most of his command fled across the Mekong to Thailand

to Thailand. The US personnel remained in Ban Houei Sai, which the enemy made no attempt to occupy.

General Bounleut was told by MAAG of the FAR's precipitate flight to Thailand. he termed the movement consistent with Phoumi's plan to employ the forces at Ban Houie Sai in a guerrilla role, rather than to establish a defensive perimeter. This statement and Bounleut's attitude signified to CHMAAG that the FAR had no intention of defending Ban Houei Sai. It was becoming increasingly apparent to CHMAAG, moreover, that the FAR would not fight anyone except "pure PL" units and that the FAR had "no intention of fighting for any part of Laos if they could get somebody else to do it."

On 29 May, the FAR commander and 20 of his men returned to Ban Houie Sai-- to what purpose CHMAAG did not know. (See item 4 June 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 233645, 25 May 62; DA IN 234194, 27 May 62; DA IN 234247, 28 May 62, DA IN 234314, 28 May 62, DA IN 234680, 29 May 62.

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27 May 62 The State Department requested Ambassador Thompson to inform the Soviet Foreign Office of its pleasure concerning the "constructive tone" of Premier Khrushchev's remarks on Laos in his recent TV address  
(see item

(see item 25 May 1962). The Department also directed Thompson to state that the US hoped that, in view of Mr. Khrushchev's attitude and Phoumi's willingness to negotiate, a settlement on Laos could very quickly be reached.

Thompson was to add, however, that reports of PL and VM military pressure against the provincial capital of Saravane had caused the US grave concern over the prospects for a speedy settlement of the Laos situation. It was, after all, impossible for negotiations to take place in an atmosphere of military threat. Therefore, Thompson was to declare that, if the constructive statements made by Premier Khrushchev were to have any meaning, the Soviet Government would have to influence Souphanouvong to cease his military pressure, thus helping to restore an effective cease-fire.

(On the following day, Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetzov replied to the US representation by saying that, although he was unaware of the events at Saravane, the US always became excited over PL actions but remained silent when Phoumi broke the cease-fire.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, NIACT 2706, 27 May 62; Moscow to SecState, 3072, 28 May 62.

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Boun Oum

29 May 62 Boun Oum and Phoumi arrived in the Philippines and were greeted with full military honors. Phoumi announced that he had come to explain the political and military situation in Laos in hopes of winning more understanding from his "Southeast Asian friends." He indicated that he was uninformed about the 15 June deadline set by Souvanna for the organization of a coalition government (see item 25 May 1962).

At a luncheon given by President Macapagal for Boun Oum and Phoumi, the Philippine President expressed his regret that Laos had not been given full support by the leading powers in the "struggle for human liberty and dignity." He said further that the Philippine Government could see no merit in a policy of neutralism which he regarded as the "gateway to communism." He therefore found it incomprehensible that in Laos Phoumi and Boun Oum should receive less support from the West than did the neutralists. He expressed his entire sympathy with the Boun Oum Government and termed the support of the neutralist approach by the West, "a species of sophistry."

The US Ambassador to the Philippines reported that he, as well as the British and Australian Ambassadors, thought that

that Macapagal had acted impetuously because of his pique at US failure to pay Philippine claims for war damages. Ambassador Stevenson also observed that there was no indication as to whether Macapagal's remarks had any effect on Boun Oum's and Phoumi's announced determination to make a sincere try at forming a coalition

(On 30 May Harriman and an aide discussed the Macapagal speech with Philippine Ambassador Abello. The US diplomats reviewed Phoumi's irresponsible and unreliable record and inquired how Macapagal could characterize Phoumi and Boun Oum as "stout leaders of the anti-communist struggle who had been abandoned by the US."

Harriman then informed Abello that President Kennedy was much disturbed by Macapagal's undercutting of US policy by offering encouragement to RLG leaders to disregard commitments which they had already undertaken. In response Abello emphasized that he thought the incident was brought about by Macapagal's ignorance of the situation and by his strong anti-Communist feelings.

In a joint communique issued by Macapagal and Boun Oum on the 30th, the two leaders repeated the substance of their previous remarks and concluded by announcing that,



that, as a sign of friendship, the two governments had made arrangements for the opening of a Philippine diplomatic mission in Vientiane.)

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(OUO) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1441, 29 May 62. (C) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1442, 29 May 62; (U) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1446, 30 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Manila, 1470, 1 Jun 62. (U) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1451, 31 May 62.

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29, 31  
May 62

No. 94

On 29 and 31 May COMUSMACTHAI and CINCPAC presented their respective replies to the JCS message of 25 May (see item) asking the importance of Sayaboury Province and directing certain contingency planning desired by the President (see item 24 May 1962).

COMUSMACTHAI did not think it either necessary or desirable for the Thai to occupy Sayaboury Province if the cease-fire broke down. Sayaboury was "not a particularly valuable piece of real estate". Its terrain was mountainous and lines of communication were extremely poor and difficult to maintain. By advancing to the Mekong River through Sayaboury, the Thai would gain time and space for defending against an overt attack, but the river would not be an improved barrier to covert infiltration. The military gains would not be commensurate, in COMUSMACTHAI's opinion, with the "potential international implications"

of the

of the occupation. In accordance with the JCS request, however, COMUSMACTHAI set forth the forces he thought the Thai would require to occupy the province: 2 infantry battalions to hold the 2 small airfields in the province, and 2 calvary squadrons to conduct patrols. He suggested finally, that as an alternative to Thai occupation, the FAR move a battalion to Sayaboury, while the US moved a helicopter unit to the area and undertook to organize the Kha tribesmen there into guerrilla units.'

Turning to a JCS request that he recommend the appropriate military response to a Communist breach of the cease-fire, COMUSMACTHAI opined that the assumptions of SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 were being overtaken by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh advances in Laos; more positive measures to bolster the FAR and actively participate in holding and clearing actions would be required. He recommended that the response to further Communist attacks be the re-capture of the Panhandle and, if feasible, the holding of Vientiane. The FAR could not accomplish this task, even with US air support, and encadrement as proposed by CINCPAC (see item 15, 19 May 1962) would not insure success either. According to COMUSMACTHAI, encadrement

encadrement "on a scale of about 50%" would be required for a chance of success. This was not practicable and, in any event, if this many US personnel were to be committed, he would prefer that they be formed in US units.

COMUSMACTHAI recommended, therefore, that the Panhandle be secured by the FAR in combination with SEATO forces on the scale contemplated in SEATO Plan 4 for the defense of Thailand, together with expanded Kha activities from the Bolovens Plateau south. SEATO Plan 4 called for ground forces of one US infantry division, one armored cavalry regiment, and one airborne battle group, Commonwealth forces of about division strength, and the entire Thai Army; air support of nine squadrons, and one US airborne division in theater reserve. From this force, COMUSMACTHAI would send one division from Thakhek along Route 8 to Nape Pass; another division would establish blocking positions to the north of Route 8 to protect this venture; a third division would conduct clean-up operations to the north of the Bolovens Plateau; while a fourth would be held for possible reinforcement of the Thakhek expedition. Air operations would support all these operations and

might

might have to extend into North Viet Nam. Moreover, COMUSMACTHAI warned, the logistical problems would be enormous; attention should be given them quickly.

Having received COMUSMACTHAI's report, CINCPAC on 31 May cabled his separate recommendations to the JCS. Like COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC felt that the political disadvantages of Thai occupation of Sayaboury overrode any military advantage thereof; he stressed in addition that this occupation would lengthen Thai borders and thereby further dilute their defenses. The forces he recommended if the Thai were to occupy the province were on the same small scale proposed by COMUSMACTHAI. Also, while not discarding encadrement entirely, CINCPAC believed that any successful effort would take at least several months and would have to include firm provision for US control of FAR operations; in the meantime, US and Thai units would be the best bolsters for the FAR.

Unlike COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC believed that SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 could still be adapted to the Laotian situation generally and the clearing of the Panhandle specifically. CINCPAC's concept of operations, however, was "in the same ballpark" with COMUSMACTHAI's. Using OPLAN 32-59 as the basis for  
initial

initial US deployments--thereby leaving aside the question of SEATO arrangements--CINCPAC thought the FAR should be supported in holding the Panhandle by 1 Marine Brigade, 1 Army infantry division, 1 Thai infantry division, 1 logistical command, and 4 tactical air squadrons, with 7th Fleet air strike groups operating in the South China Sea, and with 1 airborne division (+) in reserve.

For tactical reasons and for the purpose of most expeditiously blending outside forces with the FAR, CINCPAC would have deployed his force in smaller units--battle groups, BLTs and RCTs--than COMUSMACTHAI and to more locations--Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno and Pakse. CINCPAC suggested, moreover, covert and overt retaliatory operations against North Viet Nam and he stressed large scale interdiction as the proper role for US air power.

What differences existed between his and COMUSMACTHAI's recommendations were, in CINCPAC's opinion, occasioned principally by their different estimates of North Vietnamese reaction to US and Thai operations in the Panhandle. CINCPAC conceded that, if COMUSMACTHAI's estimate was correct, then COMUSMACTHAI's force requirements were also valid.

Ambassador

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(TS) Msgs, COMUSMACTHAI to CJCS, CINCPAC, DA IN 234703, 29 May 62; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 235086, 31 May 62.

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30 May 62      Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that although the RLG would not  
No. 95      make the recovery of Nam Tha a precondition of tripartite negotiations, it was possible that this question might arise early in negotiations. The Ambassador requested instructions on what advice he should give the RLG and outlined for the Secretary the five possible dispositions of the disputed territory: 1) the PL could remain in complete control; 2) the PL and Kong Le troops could share control of the area as they did the Plaine des Jarres 3) Kong Le could be given complete control of the disputed territory; 4) it could be completely demilitarized and policed by the ICC, or as a variant, it could be made an "open city" under ICC guard but with the Souvanna government in control of administration and 5) as a last and most improbable disposition it could be returned to the RLG. After discussing these alternatives at some length, the Ambassador concluded that RLG's initial position might be the return of Nam Tha to the RLG, but they would have to abandon this position, perhaps early in the negotiations, to avoid a rupture, and  
accept

accept as a maximum goal a demilitarized zone policed by the ICC

In his response the next day, the Secretary of State observed that the Nam Tha debacle left the RLG little to bargain with. Although the US would not wish to see complete capitulation and ready acquiescence in Communist control over an area bordering Thailand, it did not want to see prolonged arguments detract from the essential negotiations for a neutralist government. Therefore, the RLG's first position should be that Nam Tha be returned to RLG control, but it should be ready to fall back on a demand for the demilitarization of the area, and if necessary, accept replacement of the PL by Souvanna, preferably reinforced by the ICC.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1638,  
30 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 1057,  
31 May 62.

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30 May 62 Lord Home, UK Foreign Secretary, in a personal message to Secretary Rusk noted  
No. 96 that there was little time left in which to obtain a negotiated settlement of the Lao crisis, since Souvanna had laid down a 15 June deadline (see item 25 May 1962) and the King had refused to see Souvanna before 4 June. Home therefore suggested that Phoumi must go the Plaine des Jarres on 5 or 6 June.

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Since this might be the last chance to arrange the meeting, Home expressed the hope that Harriman would do everything possible to insure that Phoumi actually would sign an agreement. Home further desired that Harriman disabuse Phoumi of the hope that the US would intervene to secure partition. In addition, the Foreign Secretary agreed that some other Lao besides Boun Oum should go with Phoumi in order to prevent subsequent misrepresentation and that the US or UK ambassador should also go to keep pressure on Phoumi during the meetings.

If Phoumi again obstructed settlement, Home believed that another group should be substituted for Phoumi's clique. If no negotiations occurred and military intervention was inevitable, Phoumi's absence would remove an objection to intervention. Unfortunately, observed Home, Phoumi would not resign voluntarily, nor could any Lao in Vientiane remove him. Physical force might therefore be necessary, unless Phoumi could be bypassed and US military support transferred to Souvanna.

Lord Home further indicated that, if intervention became necessary, it would be difficult to predict how it would develop. He pointed out that events had rendered obsolete the holding operations considered



considered last year as a prelude to negotiations. Any further intervention, Lord Home suggested, would tend to develop beyond original aims with the danger of a Korean-type war developing. Home requested urgent discussion of these matters.

On the same day the Secretary discussed the message with Harriman and asked that he talk to Deputy Chief of Mission Hood who was acting in the absence of Ambassador Ormsby Gore. In outlining the US position in regard to the issues brought up in Lord Home's message, Harriman, after expressing the Secretary's gratitude for Home's interest in the question, indicated that the US thought that further talks on some of the points mentioned would be desirable at some later date.

Turning to the Prince's meeting, Harriman said that the US agreed that it should take place immediately after Souvanna saw the King. Ambassador Brown, Harriman continued, would be so instructed.

Harriman then questioned the phrasing in Home's message which implied that the US must, if necessary, force Phoumi to sign. The US diplomat pointed out that the Souphanouvong faction might raise the ante to a point where the US might not want to force Phoumi's acceptance. Harriman added,

added, however, that the US would pressure Phoumi to sign an acceptable agreement. Hood assented to this interpretation.

In regard to US intervention to secure partition, Harriman said that Phoumi had been informed several times that the US would not intervene militarily to back him. Hood expressed the hope that the US would reiterate this position to Phoumi.

On the question of ambassadorial representation at the Plaine des Jarres meeting, Harriman indicated that the State Department had complete confidence in Addis and said that the UK Ambassador definitely should accompany Phoumi to the meeting. The Department, however, thought it best that Brown not attend. Perhaps some junior officer would go instead.

As to the possibility that Phoumi might again refuse to sign, Harriman believed it would be best to wait and see how he acted. The US diplomat added that he was still seeking a way to get Phoumi out of the picture (see item 12 May 1962) and would welcome any ideas on the subject. He indicated that the Secretary had considered the transfer of recognition and support to Souvanna, as suggested in Lord Home's message, but  
had not

had not found a satisfactory method of doing it, the difficulty being that US support would place Souvanna in opposition to Souphanouvong so that Souvanna would no longer be neutral.

In regard to the method of intervention, if that became necessary, Harriman indicated that various alternatives were being considered but that any such action should be directed to the support of the political objective of a neutral and independent Laos.

Harriman concluded his remarks to Hood by saying that the Secretary was also concerned over Souvanna's deadline and felt that it might be suggested to Addis and Falaize that they insist to Souvanna that he relax his position. In response to Hood's suggestion that Souvanna might be more easily pressured on this point after negotiations had started, Harriman said he felt it best to put the idea into Souvanna's mind "right off" so that he could retract the deadline at the most opportune moment.

As a result of this exchange of ideas between the UK and US Governments the Secretary of State requested that Ambassador Brown suggest to Addis that he persuade Souvanna to issue invitations for the Princes' meeting to be held on June 5 or 6 and that he impress Phoumi with the  
absolute

absolute necessity of his accepting the invitation and attending the meeting.

The Secretary further requested that Brown request of Addis and Falaize that they recommend to Souvanna that he be prepared to relax his June 15 deadline.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1053 and 1054, 30 May 62.

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30 May 62      The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Thompson that the British Foreign Office  
No. 97      had instructed UK Ambassador Roberts to support US representations concerning the latest cease-fire violations by the PL. The British felt, Rusk reported, that the situation was moving toward a breakdown of negotiations. The UK therefore wanted its views on record.

As a result, Lord Home had sent a note to Gromyko in which, after reviewing recent events in Laos, he warned that the military pressures being exerted by the Communists at Saravane and Ban Houie Sai precluded the continuation of fruitful negotiations and could result in a resumption of general hostilities. The UK, he said, could not believe that any party would be so ill-advised as to risk for some minor military advantage all that had been achieved over the last year.

Lord Home informed the Soviet Foreign Office that he was confident that the

Co-Chairmen

Co-Chairmen could prevent the break-up of negotiations. He noted that the UK was constantly pressuring the RLG to avoid clashes, and he hoped that the Soviet Union might do the same with regard to the PL forces. These influences, the Foreign Minister thought, were the best means of preventing repeated violations of the cease-fire and of assuring a negotiated settlement. In view of this, the UK was unable to understand Soviet reluctance to issue further instructions to the ICC, and hoped that the Soviets would be able to declare that they had now agreed to take this action.

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(C) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 2736,  
30 May 62.

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31 May 62      The Defense Intelligence Agency reported  
that certain SEATO contingents had either  
No. 98      arrived in Thailand or were expected to  
arrive shortly. According to the  
report, the Australian element consisted  
of 350 personnel including 50 paratroops,  
eight F-86 aircraft, five Canberra bomber  
aircraft, and two C-130 transport  
aircraft. These forces would probably  
be located at Ubon. New Zealand was  
sending 35 paratroops, who probably  
would be located near Ban Na Khu, plus  
Bristol transport aircraft and 25 personnel  
to be located at Korat. The UK contingent  
was composed

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was composed of 20 Hawker Hunter fighter aircraft based near Chieng Mai.

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(S-NOFORN) DIA Intelligence Bulletin, 107-62, 1 Jun 62.

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31 May 62      The Department of State provided the US Embassy in Vientiane and other diplomatic posts with an intelligence estimate of Viet Minh and Pathet Lao units in Laos, designed for briefing foreign government officials and selected press representatives. According to this estimate, there were 10,000 Viet Minh troops in Laos: 5,000 formed into 10 battalions in northern and central Laos; 5,000 serving as "advisers" to the Pathet Lao. The "advisers" served not only to advise but also to command Pathet Lao combat units and to control and fire both antiaircraft and field artillery. The Pathet Lao were comprised of 19,500 combat troops formed in 39 battalions throughout Laos, and 2,000 guerrillas. The Viet Minh and Pathet Lao were supplied extensively from North Viet Nam, by truck convoy and by Soviet airlift.

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1059, 31 May 62.

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1. During

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JUNESummary of Major Subjects

1. During June, Phoumi agreed to accept the Troika principle as a means of safeguarding the interests of the rival factions in Laos and conferred with Souvanna, who rescinded his deadline on negotiations. These meetings, also attended by Souphanouvong, resulted in agreement on a coalition government headed by Souvanna. The Lao national assembly ratified the compromise reached by the rival factions, and the coalition government was formally installed.

Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24, 34, 39.

2. With the formation of a neutral government in Laos, the US decided to increase the strength and alter the composition of the American forces in Thailand.

Nos. 26, 35, 55, 63.

3. The new coalition began functioning as the legitimate government of Laos, holding cabinet meetings and indicating a willingness both to accept Soviet aid and to establish diplomatic ties with nations of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

Nos. 47, 50, 56, 64, 66, 67, 68.

4. US diplomatic preparations also were made to gain acceptance by America's allies of the agreements that had been under negotiation at Geneva.

Nos. 28, 29, 32, 33, 40, 41, 46, 53, 60, 62, 65.

5. Although the US, like the Soviet Union, expressed satisfaction at the compromise, the establishment of a coalition government necessitated a restatement of the US position toward the kingdom and raised certain military, political, and diplomatic problems. In the military sphere, the major problems included the eventual withdrawal of the MAAG and the establishment of a stay-behind guerrilla force in Laos. The most important political question was the future relationship

between

between the US and Phoumi. In the diplomatic field, the US attempted, through French influence, to orient Souvanna toward the West, and to secure the release of Americans still held prisoner in Laos.

a. US position toward Laos.

Nos. 27, 31, 36.

b. Military.

Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 25,  
26, 30, 37, 38, 45, 48, 54, 57, 61.

c. Political.

Nos. 5, 43, 44, 49, 59.

d. Diplomatic.

Nos. 21, 31, 41, 42, 51, 56, 62.

General Phoumi,



1 Jun 62      General Phoumi, reportedly at the behest of  
CHMAAG, reorganized the FAR command structure,  
No. 1      making Laos a single military theater and  
appointing General Bounleut theater commander.  
The theater was divided into northern and  
southern fronts, with headquarters at Vientiane and Savannakhet respectively, and  
divided by the Nam Ca Dinh. The fronts were  
further divided into zones, which corresponded  
to the previous military regions. The remaining FAR commands remained, generally  
speaking, unchanged.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG LAOS to CINCPAC, DA IN 236695, 6 Jun 62; (C) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DEPTAR, DA IN 238127, 11 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62      Foreign Minister Sisouk made an "impassioned  
plea" to Ambassador Brown that the US resume  
No. 2      economic aid to the RLG now that Phoumi had  
agreed to all US demands concerning the resumption of tripartite negotiations. Sisouk  
claimed that a resumption of aid would  
bolster the present RLG's influence in the  
negotiations and in the resultant coalition.  
Without economic aid it would be difficult for  
Phoumi to do what the US wanted.

Ambassador Brown requested that the  
Department of State instruct him to reply to  
Sisouk that the US would consider resumption  
of aid after the three Princes agreed but before the new government was actually installed.  
The Secretary of State approved this recommendation but added that the Lao should not  
necessarily

necessarily expect aid to be resumed in the form of a monthly check. The US wished to preserve flexibility in the amount and means as well as the conditions for future aid.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1652, 25 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1062, 2 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62      As part of his effort to evaluate the extent to which Communist control of part or all of Laos would aid the Viet Minh and Chinese Communists in their efforts to infiltrate Thailand, Cambodia and South Viet Nam, the Secretary of Defense asked CINCPAC, COMUSMACTHAI, and CHMAAG Laos to evaluate:

No. 3

1. The effect a coalition government would have on the ability of the North Vietnamese to infiltrate through Laos into South Viet Nam and Thailand.

2. The effect that control by a Western-oriented government of the Mekong Valley, or of the entire Laotian Panhandle, would have on the ability of the Communists to infiltrate into South Viet Nam and Thailand.

3. The likelihood that Communist efforts to subvert Thailand and South Viet Nam could be defeated if the Communists gained political control of all Laos.

On the next day the Secretary received replies from CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI that expressed almost identical opinions. The two commanders agreed that the proposed coalition government of Laos would do little

to inhibit

to inhibit the present use of Laos by the Communists in their efforts to infiltrate and subvert South Viet Nam and Thailand.

Neither CINCPAC nor COMUSMACTHAI believed that control by Western-oriented forces, including US troops, of the Mekong Valley, or even of the entire Panhandle, would be more than partially effective in preventing Communist infiltration, because of the continued existence of alternate routes for the infiltrators.

In regard to the Secretary's last question, COMUSMACTHAI thought that it would be very difficult to prevent the subversion of Thailand and South Viet Nam if the Communists controlled Laos, while CINCPAC thought that it would be impossible.

[Careful search of JCS records failed to reveal a reply from CHMAAG Laos.]

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(TS) Msgs, OSD to CINCPAC et al., DEF 910536, 2 Jun 62; CINCPAC to SecDef, 032205Z Jun 62; COMUSMACTHAI to SecDef, DA IN 236047, 3 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62      At a meeting of White House, Department of  
No. 4      State, and Department of Defense officials,  
Secretary McNamara sought to clarify US military objectives with respect to Laos by enumerating those courses of action to which the Department of Defense was opposed. Defense, he declared, would recommend against: 1) a "solo" effort by the Thais to occupy Sayaboury Province; 2) US encadrement of the FAR; 3) the employment

employment of US air forces in combination with the FAR alone; 4) the substantial use of South Vietnamese forces in Laos; and 5) the occupation of the Mekong Valley with only 8,000 or 10,000 US troops. In elaborating upon this last point, Secretary McNamara stated that, because such a small force could neither defend itself in all contingencies nor rely on the FAR for support, his Department would propose a variant which would involve the employment of some 40,000 US troops, most of whom would be used as "back-up" in Thailand.

The conferees then discussed various military aspects of the Laos question. Afterward, a representative of the Department of State summarized the conversation by listing six phases of the potential US military response to further Communist attacks in Laos. These phases were: 1) a build-up of military forces; 2) occupation of the Mekong River Valley; 3) US air action in Laos; 4) forward movement in Laos to secure the Panhandle; 5) US air action against North Vietnamese targets; and 6) amphibious operations against North Viet Nam.

Secretary McNamara then observed that: 1) the build-up should be accomplished in such a manner that Phoumi would not be encouraged to resist the formation of a Lao coalition; and 2) he would "contemplate" US aerial action in Laos only in conjunction with the forward movement of US ground forces into the Panhandle. Following these remarks, the Secretary of State commented upon: 1) the need for a clear-cut

directive

directive to the military commander delineating phase lines; 2) the need for readiness in Korea against the possibility of Communist reaction in that quarter to any form of US intervention in Laos; and 3) the fact that the President should be informed that there was insufficient information available to make a totally reliable estimate of Communist actions.

No firm decisions were reached during the discussion, although there was general agreement that, while Laos was not important in itself, the Mekong Valley in particular was important to the defense of Southeast Asia. The Departments of State and Defense, however, were directed to prepare a memorandum (see item 4 June 1962) which would serve as the basis for a forthcoming discussion with the President concerning possible US intervention in Laos.

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(TS) JCS 2344/56, 19 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62), sec 2.

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3 Jun 62      During a visit to Bangkok, Phoumi, according to information later given by Sarit to Ambassador  
No. 5      Young, endorsed the Troika principle, declaring that no one Lao faction should be allowed to act alone, especially in matters pertaining to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Phoumi, Sarit continued, had also stated that all RLG executive agencies, both civilian and military, should retain their present status until integration was underway.

In addition, Phoumi asked Sarit to inquire:  
1) what the US would do if Souvanna rejected US  
aid,

aid, accepted aid from both East and West, or turned US aid over to the Communists; 2) what guarantees the US would provide against Communist domination of Laos; and 3) how the US would assist the anti-Communist element within a coalition government. In making this request of Sarit, Phoumi indicated that the RLG desired specific answers before the meeting of the Princes began. Phoumi also expressed a desire for American sympathy for his cause, and requested some indication of US firmness toward the Communists.

Sarit, in relating this conversation to Ambassador Young, remarked that Phoumi, although willing to enter negotiations, desired assurance that the US would not abandon him once the coalition had been formed. Young responded by affirming once again that, if a satisfactory government were formed, the US would help maintain its friends in power.

In his report of the Sarit-Phoumi conversation, the Ambassador added that the Thai Prime Minister admitted giving Phoumi some "'stern advice.'" According to sources other than Sarit, Phoumi had been told that the US would not abandon him if he negotiated in good faith. The Prime Minister, it was said, also told Phoumi to stop seeking assistance from other Asian countries, to "stay at home where he is needed," and to "keep his mouth shut."

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 6 Jun 62.

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Prior

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4 Jun 62

No. 6

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Prior to a meeting with Souvanna at Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown discussed with Phoumi the resumption of tripartite negotiations. Phoumi agreed that no new conditions should be imposed before negotiations began and that the formation of a new government should be the first order of business. If Souvanna and Souphanouvaong agreed to the Trioka principle for Defense and Interior posts and the maintenance of forces pending agreement on integration, the RLG would accept all of Souvanna's other requests. Phoumi did not believe the composition of the center neutralist group nor locale of the negotiations to be problems.

In response to Ambassador Brown's report of this conversation, the State Department expressed concern over the possibility that Phoumi's interest in Defense and Interior posts in the new government would divert him from the essential bargaining on other portfolios and on issues such as the composition of the center group. The Secretary of State said that the final composition of the new government must have an acceptable tripartite balance and that Phoumi must resist Souphanouvong's stepped-up demands for changes in the cabinet formula.

Later that day Souvanna summarized for the Western Ambassadors the progress toward negotiations. He reported that the King had renewed his mandate to form the coalition government and urged him to act quickly. He agreed to Phoumi's demands and said that the distribution of cabinet portfolios

portfolios should be easy to settle. The Prince warned, however, that if the question of Nam Tha was raised there could be no agreement with Souphanouvong.

Ambassador Brown requested instructions on what position he should take if Phoumi refused to accept the de facto loss of Nam Tha. The Secretary of State answered that Phoumi was in no position to take issue over Nam Tha and that he should not use it to obstruct negotiations. Phoumi would suffer greater loss of face by raising the subject of Nam Tha and then being forced to back down. If he understood that the US would not support him in his demands, he would not force the issue. When questioned later the same day by Ambassador Brown, however, Phoumi gave assurances that he would not raise the question of Nam Tha as a condition to the formation of a coalition government except to insist that henceforth there should be a "real cease-fire." Phoumi also indicated that he would work for the inclusion of at least four Vientiane neutrals in the ten-man center group.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1655, 4 Jun 62; 1661, 5 Jun 62; 1662, 5 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1067, 4 Jun 62; 1070, 5 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 7

CHMAAG reported that the past week had been uneventful at Ban Houie Sai (see item 25-29 May 1962): no contacts had been made with the enemy; a US advisory group of 10 remained at the airstrip; and several hundred FAR troops were in the vicinity. The FAR troops were still under



under orders from Bounleut to conduct a "mobile" defense of the town. To CHMAAG these instructions meant only that the FAR would "fade away again if Ban Houie Sai is threatened."

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 236034, 4 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 8

The Canadian Government informed the US Ambassador that Souvanna's threat to return to Paris (see item 25 May 1962) had produced a state of crisis in the Laotian situation. Unless significant progress towards a settlement could be reached before 15 June, the Western position would be completely undermined. The Canadian Government therefore urged the US both to increase its efforts to get Phoumi to come to terms and to persuade the RLG to allow an ICC team to make an early visit to Ban Houei Sai. This visit, the Canadian Government believed, might be a stabilizing factor in this sensitive area.

Basing its judgment on the reports of the Canadian member of the ICC, which were believed to represent the consensus of the Western diplomatic community in Vientiane, the Canadian Government expressed its belief that Phoumi had deliberately invited the Pathet Lao aggression at Nam Tha in an effort to provoke US military intervention. The Canadian member of ICC had also reported that the Indian member, although in apparent agreement with his draft report

report on the Laos situation, refused to forward it as an Indian/Canadian majority report. The Canadian Government speculated that Indian reluctance was due to a fear that the Communists would conclude that India was no longer neutral and hence that the "structure" of the ICC was no longer compatible with Communist interests.

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(C) Msg, Ottawa to SecState, 1246, 4 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 9

Ambassador Young, in a message to the Secretary of State, urged the adoption of certain courses of action suggested in General Harkins's analysis of the problem of Communist infiltration of Thailand from Sayaboury Province (see item 29 May 1962). Specifically, the Ambassador recommended that the US intensify its efforts to train Sayaboury's Kha tribesmen in guerrilla operations. He further urged the preparation of contingency plans for the stationing of FAR units at the airfields in the province, the deployment toward the border of two RTA cavalry squadrons, and the stationing of US helicopters at Phrae to support the augmented border patrol. These measures, Young believed, would satisfy Sarit's concern for his nation's security and thus forestall the possibility of intervention in Sayaboury Province, an action which could result in Thailand's being branded as an aggressor. The Ambassador again emphasized that Sarit, regardless of US wishes, might feel compelled to take such action, with or without Lao approval, if he felt Thailand was in peril (see item 24 May 1962).

An interdepartmental

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(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1717),  
4 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 10

An interdepartmental working group completed a draft memorandum to be used in a forthcoming meeting with the President. Discussed in this draft were the six phases of potential US military action (see item 2 June 1962) to be undertaken in the event that the military situation in Laos deteriorated to a dangerous extent.

1. Further military build-up outside Laos. Although an obvious military build-up in Thailand would tend to cause Phoumi to resist a settlement, "this should not preclude buildup measures that would not become clearly visible . . . ." The build-up could be speeded and made "as visible as possible," if the Communists sought unacceptable concessions during the negotiations being conducted in Laos.

2. Occupation of the Mekong River areas. Such a course of action, which would require that 35,000 troops be readily available, could result in a long-term occupation by US/SEATO forces. Since the garrison would be immobilized and subject to possible Communist attack, the military situation might require further action in Laos or against North Viet Nam.

3. Air attacks against selected targets in Laos. Although such attacks might deter the Communists to some extent, aerial action could not stop a really determined offensive.

4. Offensive

4. Offensive operations in Laos.

This course of action would compel the US to maintain large forces in the Panhandle area and in Thailand for an indefinite period of time, since it would not end permanently the possibility of continued North Vietnamese pressure.

5. Air action against North Viet Nam.

These attacks could be made in conjunction with offensive operations in Laos or, as an alternative, in conjunction with the occupation of the Mekong Valley. The severity of the US aerial action would correspondingly increase the chances that Communist Chinese air forces would intervene. Except as a last resort, massive attacks on Hanoi should be avoided, since they would vastly increase the chances of full-scale Chinese intervention.

6. Amphibious operations against North Viet Nam. Although the full military needs and the risks of such an undertaking would have to be assessed carefully, these operations might, in the absence of Chinese Communist intervention, be a "more persuasive and cheaper action than an attempt to win control of the Panhandle."

After its examination of these six possibilities, the draft memorandum set forth the following recommendations for immediate action:

1. The carrying out of those build-up measures which would not indicate, either to Phoumi or to the Communists, a major strengthening of the US position.

2. In the

2. In the event of a sufficiently serious Communist military move before this build-up was completed, the US should seek UN action and employ aircraft against Communist forces at the point where the cease-fire had been broken. The US forces in Thailand would be moved to the maximum number of key points which they could successfully occupy. These units would be reinforced, and plans would be made to extend the occupation throughout the Mekong Valley and to build up ready strength in Thailand to 45,000 men.

3. If the negotiations in Laos should break down, major reinforcements should, with a minimum of publicity, be dispatched to Thailand.

(See item 6 June 1962.)

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(TS) JCS 2344/50, 5 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62).

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5 Jun 62

No. 11

In a memorandum to the JCS, the Secretary of Defense registered his increasing concern over the logistical limitations on possible US combat operations in Laos (see item 29, 31 May 1962). According to the Secretary, a preliminary estimate by ISA had concluded that successful logistical support of the forces proposed for Laos would be problematical. The support program, moreover, was uncomfortably dependent upon the vulnerable Thai railways. The President would never approve combat operations in Laos, the Secretary said, unless he was shown "carefully thought-out and detailed plans" to supply US forces.

US forces. The Secretary urged therefore that detailed logistic planning for possible intervention be undertaken at once by COMUS-MACTHAI, CINCPAC, and the Joint Staff. (See item 8 June 1962.)

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(TS) JCS 2344/51, 5 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

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6 Jun 62      Responding to a request from CJCS (see item  
No. 12      24 May 1962), CHMAAG listed the improvements he  
thought the FAR could begin to make within 90  
days. Repeating in many cases the recommendations  
he had made to Phoumi on 13 May (see item), CHMAAG  
told CJCS that Phoumi should be at once to:  
1) replace incompetent officers; 2) delegate  
adequate authority to FAR commanders; 3) place  
the Lao Air Force under the operational authority  
of the FAR field commander; 4) improve the FAR  
logistical system; 5) reduce the FAR to authorized  
strength; 6) redeploy units according to MAAG  
recommendations; 7) rescind the requirement that  
MAAG personnel secure Ministry of National Security  
clearance for visiting FAR elements; and 8) make  
better use of Thai and other training facilities.

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CJCS, DA IN 236783,  
6 Jun 62.

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6 Jun 62      Boun Oum accepted Souvanna's invitation to meet  
No. 13      at Plaine des Jarres on 7 June to negotiate on  
the formation of a coalition government for Laos.  
He announced that he would be accompanied by  
associates and members of the cease-fire committee.

The JCS

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~~TOP SECRET~~  

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1672,  
6 Jun 62.

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6 Jun 62      The JCS, in a memorandum for the Secretary of  
Defense, suggested that the interdepartmental  
working group's draft memorandum on possible  
No. 14      military actions in Laos (see item 4 June 1962)  
might be modified to, among other things: 1)  
shift the emphasis from US response to US  
offensive action; 2) provide a larger role to  
the FAR, although that organization admittedly  
had proved relatively ineffective; 3) specify  
that Vientiane would be held; 4) note that air  
attacks on targets in Laos could possibly limit  
the Communist ability to mount a major offensive;  
5) state that US air attacks on North Viet Nam  
might possibly deter Communist Chinese inter-  
vention; and 6) avoid placing restrictions upon  
either the targets to be engaged during aerial  
actions in Laos or North Viet Nam or the forces  
required for amphibious operations against North  
Viet Nam.

On the same day, the JCS met with the  
Secretary of Defense and discussed his objections  
to the interdepartmental draft. In Mr.  
McNamara's opinion, the draft: 1) should treat  
all possible phases of action as possible plans  
rather than firm proposals; 2) overstated the  
military usefulness of a US occupation of the  
Mekong Valley; 3) failed to make it clear that  
Communist reaction to a US move into the Mekong  
Valley might be both prompt and vigorous, thus  
leading

leading quickly to some further US action; 4) erred in not requiring that a 35,000-man reserve force be actually present in Thailand, rather than near at hand, at the time the occupation of the Mekong Valley was undertaken; and 5) underestimated the type of opposition that could be encountered in the Panhandle, and therefore assigned fewer than the necessary 45,000 US troops to this operation.

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(TS) JCSM-431-62, 6 Jun 62, derived from JCS 2344/52; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62). (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/50; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62).

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8 Jun 62      Ambassador Gavin reported that the French Government feared that the presence of US troops in  
No. 15      Thailand might be used by the USSR or by Communist China as an excuse to "make trouble" in reaching agreement on the final accords at Geneva. The French fear, Gavin added, might be justified.

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-2277,  
8 Jun 62.

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8 Jun 62      Indian Commonwealth Secretary Gundevia in a  
No. 16      general review of the situation in Laos informed US Charge Timmons that the ICC had made a formal request to the RLG and PL for their approval of the proposed ICC investigative visit to Ban Houei Sai. Timmons reported that Gundevia seemed optimistic when he noted that Souvanna had agreed not to return to France on 15 June (see item 25 May 1962) if prospects for the formation of a coalition government appeared good.

The CJCS



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~~TOP SECRET~~  

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(S) Msgs, New Delhi to SecState, 3948, 8 Jun 62, 3957, 9 Jun 62; (C) Msg, SecState to New Delhi, 4412, 29 Jun 62.

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8 Jun 62      The CJCS informed the Secretary of Defense, in response to the Secretary's memorandum of No. 17      5 June (see item), that detailed logistical planning for the support of possible combat operations in Laos was going forward on an urgent basis in Honolulu and Bangkok. Regarding the possible logistical limitations on US actions, the CJCS remarked that US and SEATO plans for Southeast Asia, including plans for possible intervention in Laos, had been thoroughly examined by the JCS and declared logistically supportable, even during the rainy season. With respect to the vulnerability and limited capacity of the Thai railroads, CJCS reported that air and road lift could take up any slack left by rail lift. He emphasized, moreover, that the US would deploy substantial logistical support forces during any intervention; these forces would be used to maintain and improve existing lines of communication. It was his considered view, CJCS concluded, that existing US and SEATO plans, and the concepts proposed by CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI (see item 29, 31 May 1962), could be supported logistically.

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(TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2353/20, 12 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

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In response

8 Jun 62 In response to a request made to Admiral Riley by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Bundy, the No. 18 CJCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum containing information on the deployment times of various units. These units were the forces which CINCPAC had listed as necessary for the expansion of his OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Laos) to include the clearing of the Panhandle and the occupation of key Laotian cities.

The Chairman informed the Secretary of Defense as follows:

Major Units	Location Now	Mode of Transportation and Closing Time	Improvements Feasible, Sea to Air
<u>US</u>			
Marine Brigade	1 BLT Thailand. Brig (-) Okinawa.	In Place. Air, D plus 1 to D plus 9. Sea, D plus 9 to D plus 30	D plus 1 by air for sea elements less heavy equip- ment.
Army Division	1 BG Thailand 25th Div (-) Hawaii.	In Place. Sea, D plus 6 to D plus 27.	D plus 7 for austere division.
Logistical Support	CONUS.	Air, D plus 4 to D plus 25. Sea, D plus 30 to D plus 40.	All pax by air in three days. Air transportable cargo in 18.8 days after movement of 25th Div.
<u>US Air</u>			
TAC Bomber Squadron	Japan	Air, D plus 1.	
1 Fighter Squadron	Clark Field	Air, D plus 1.	
1 Fighter Squadron	Thailand.	In Place	
1 TAC Recce	Okinawa	Air, D plus 1.	
1 US Div. (in reserve at Clark Field)	101st Abn, Fort Campbell.		Air, close within 9 days (austere division) after movement of logistical support.

Major Units	Location Now	Mode of Transportation and Closing Time	Improvements Feasible, Sea to Air
503rd BG- Reserve. (At Clark Field.)	Okinawa.	Air, D plus 1.	
<u>Non-US</u>			
1 Thai Div.	Thailand.	In Place.	
New Zealand, Inf. Battalion	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1 (Approximately 60 paratroopers and two transport aircraft in place.)	
Australia, Inf. Battalion.	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1.	
UK, Inf. Battalion	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1.	
Australia, Fighter Squadron	Singapore.	In Place.	
UK, Fighter Squadron.	Thailand.	In Place.	

(TS) CM-926-62, 8 Jun 62, CJCS-091 Laos (4).  
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 235086, 310001Z May 62.

9 Jun 62 Commenting on various aspects of the current negotiations for a coalition government, Ambassador No. 19 Brown noted the desirability of denying the Foreign Affairs portfolio to Quinim Pholsena. He recommended to the Department of State, however, that he be allowed to advise Phoumi not to make the presence of Quinim in the Foreign Affairs post the reason for breaking up the negotiations. At the same time, Brown agreed with the British and French Ambassadors that the designation of Souphanouvong as Senior Deputy Prime Minister would be improper. The Secretary of State concurred in Ambassador Brown's recommendation.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1688, 9 Jun 62; 1690, 9 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane 1088, 9 Jun 62.

Tripartite

~~TOP SECRET~~

12 Jun 62

No. 20

~~TOP SECRET~~

Tripartite agreement was reached on the formation of a Provisional Government of National Union with Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister. The 19-man cabinet was split into four groups, as follows: 1) 4 PL, with Souphanouvong as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Planning and Phoumi Vongvichit as Minister of Information; 2) 4 RLG with Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his followers holding Education, Fine Arts, and Sports and Youth; 3) 7 Souvanna neutralists, with Souvanna as Minister of Defense, Veterans, and Rural Affairs as well as Prime Minister, Quinim Pholsena as Foreign Minister, and Pheng Phongsavan as Minister of Interior and Social Welfare; and 4) 4 Vientiane neutralists, including Ngon Sananikone as Minister of Public Works and Keo Viprakone as Secretary of State for Social Welfare. The Souvanna neutralists would retain control of the Defense and Interior Ministries, and all political groups were agreed the tripartite decision rule on all important questions would apply in both these Ministries as well as that of Foreign Affairs.

During the three-day negotiations an agreement was reached on procedures for the installation of the new government. Souvanna would report the agreement to the King on 14 June; Phoumi would report to the National Assembly on 15 or 16 June. Souvanna had agreed, and would seek Souphanouvong's approval, to a

plan

plan that would make the Assembly's approval of the Plaine des Jarres accord, together with the King's formal designation of Souvanna as Prime Minister, the legal investiture of the new government. After investiture, Souvanna would lead a delegation to the 14-nation Geneva conference to sign the agreements on a neutral Laos.

As a result of Phoumi's performance during the negotiations, Ambassador Brown announced that cash grant aid to the RLG would be resumed even though several steps remained to be taken before the new government was installed (see item 23 June 1962).

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1676, 7 Jun 62; 1680, 8 Jun 62; 1697, 10 Jun 62; 1698, 11 Jun 62; and 1725, 14 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62      The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Gavin to mention to the French Government that

No. 21      the US believed it was necessary for France to take a positive and responsible role in its relations with Souvanna. More specifically, the Secretary expressed to the Ambassador his hope that the French would attempt to get Souvanna to cooperate with all the non-Communists in Laos, as well as with the Western Allies.

Secretary Rusk noted that the presence of the French Military Mission in Laos would provide the only means by which the Lao armed forces could receive Western orientation. For this reason, the Department instructed

Gavin

Gavin to stress to the French the importance of selecting qualified personnel for their military mission.

(In response to Gavin's suggestions, M. Manac'h on 14 June noted that he was to meet with the General Staff to discuss the problem of the Military Mission. Manac'h said that he thought the French had funds for the support of 300 to 400 people, but that as yet the Government had set no specific target figure. Gavin noted that French thinking on the Military Mission was not very far advanced.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 6696, 12 Jun 62; Paris to SecState, 6005, 14 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62      Ambassador Brown recommended that the US again invite Souvanna to visit Washington on his way home to Laos from Paris. Souvanna's previous objections, particularly his objection to not being received as head of the Lao government, were now eliminated, and the Ambassador believed such a visit would be both timely and "mutually advantageous." (See item 14 June 1962.)

No. 22

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1700, 12 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62      President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev exchanged messages regarding the successful formation of a Lao Government under Prince Souvanna. Both the US President and the Soviet Premier expressed pleasure at this accomplishment and called for the fulfillment of the obligations

No. 23

obligations undertaken at the Geneva Conference. The President declared that the establishment of an independent and neutral Laos, securely sustained by the cooperative efforts of the US and USSR, would have a significant and positive effect far beyond the borders of that kingdom. Mr. Khrushchev expressed similar sentiments, stating that the Lao settlement indicated that other international issues might also be resolved.

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Department of State Bulletin, vol. XLVII, no. 1201, 2 Jul 62, p. 12.

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12 Jun 62 Prime Minister Khrushchev sent a message to Prime Minister Macmillan in which he expressed  
No. 24 his pleasure at the successful completion of the Laotian negotiations.

Khrushchev termed this event "pivotal . . . in the life of the Laotian people . . . and in the cause of strengthening peace in south-east Asia." The Soviet Premier also thought that the Laotian settlement provided a good example of the way in which all outstanding international problems might be solved.

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(U) London to SecState, A-1331, 18 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62 Noting that the three Princes had signed an agreement on the formation of a coalition govern-  
No. 25 ment, CHMAAG Laos asked CINCPAC for authority to enter Phase I (Warning Phase) of his OPLAN 63-62 (see item 30 March 1962) for the withdrawal of  
the MAAG

the MAAG. CINCPAC replied on the same day that, although planning for the withdrawal of MAAG personnel should continue, no steps toward actual withdrawal should be taken until "hard evidence" indicated that the Communists were withdrawing their forces. (On the following day, the JCS concurred in CINCPAC's instructions.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 238321, 12 Jan 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 122310Z Jun 62; (TS) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4993, 13 Jun 62.

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12-13  
Jun 62

No. 26

The Secretaries of State and Defense and their senior advisers, White House officials, and representatives of the CIA met on 12 June to discuss US military planning in the light of the agreement by the three parties in Laos to form a government of national union (see item 12 June 1962). The officials agreed that the apparent settlement had not altered the military basis for contingency planning. They further affirmed that planning should continue along the following lines: 1) air operations in Laos and North Viet Nam; 2) defensive ground operations in Laos; 3) offensive ground operations in Laos, including holding Vientiane and the Panhandle; and 4) less extensive offensive operations to hold only the Mekong Valley.

The conferees also conceded that there remained some difference of opinion between State and Defense regarding that phase of contingency planning which anticipated US forces holding the Mekong River Valley. The two Departments

were



were agreed on the importance of holding the Valley, but Defense, including the JCS, felt that the State Department concept of introducing US forces for the sole purpose of occupying the valley was militarily unwise, in that such forces might find themselves immobilized in the valley and unable to control the movement of enemy personnel and equipment through Laos into South Viet Nam. Despite this conviction, however, the Defense Department expressed itself as willing to proceed with contingency planning under the State Department concept for holding the Mekong Valley. Such planning, Secretary McNamara said, would be helpful to the President if and when he had to make a decision on intervention. There was no need at present, McNamara continued, for the President to make such a decision.

There was, however, one decision that the Secretary of Defense did want made: a program for the improvement of logistical facilities in Thailand. (See item 15 June 1962.) The Secretary had in mind a program costing about \$20 million in US funds; but this program, he stressed would not only support contingency planning for Laos, but also support the defense of Thailand itself and speed the economic development of Northeast Thailand.

On the following day, the two Secretaries and the Chairman JCS, and other State, Defense, CIA and White House officials covered the same ground in a meeting with the President. The President accepted the report on contingency

planning

planning without comment; and he decided to discuss further with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State the logistical support program for Thailand.

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(TS) JCS 2344/57, 3 Jul 62; JMF 9155.2/3100.  
(TS) JCS 2344/55, 19 Jun 62; JMF 9155.2/3100  
(14 Jun 62). (TS) M.V. Forrestal Memo for Record,  
Subj: Meeting with the President on Contingency  
Planning for Laos, 14 Jun 62; 091 CJCS - Laos (4).

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13 Jun 62      The State Department instructed Ambassador Brown  
No. 27      to inform the RLG that US economic aid to Laos  
was being resumed, and that a payment of \$3  
million was being made to the Federal Reserve  
Bank of New York, as fiscal agent of the US, for  
the account of the National Bank of Laos. The  
Department told Brown that Lao funds derived  
from US aid would henceforth be held exclusively  
in the United States.

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, NIACT 1110,  
13 Jun 62.

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13 Jun 62      Secretary Rusk instructed Ambassador Young to  
No. 28      deliver, on the following day, a letter from  
President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit. In  
this letter, the President expressed his personal  
thanks for the support given by Sarit and the  
RTG in the establishment of a Lao coalition.  
The US, President Kennedy continued, was de-  
pending upon Thailand's continued assistance in  
obtaining ratification of the Geneva Agreement.  
In addition, the President looked forward to  
US-Thai cooperation in providing the "tangible  
support and assistance necessary to enable the

new Lao

new Lao Government to maintain its independence as well as its neutrality."

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(LOU) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1976, 13 Jun 62.

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13 Jun 62      Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Young that  
No. 29      the Department of State was "uneasy" because of  
Thailand's apparent reluctance to accept a Lao renunciation of SEATO protection or to sign a Geneva Agreement. The Secretary of State therefore instructed Ambassador Young to warn Thanat that, if Thailand refused to sign the agreement, North Viet Nam might also refuse, thus destroying the basis for international control over the withdrawal from Laos of foreign troops. Since this controlled withdrawal was the "paramount US objective," Thai cooperation was vital. In addition, Young was to seek assurance that Thailand would agree to modifying SEATO's role in such a way that the organization's activities would be compatible with Lao independence and neutrality.

(On 14 June, Ambassador Young suggested that the RTG be invited to take part in Allied pre-Conference strategy sessions at Geneva. Secretary Rusk, on the following day, again instructed Young to approach Thanat, since Thailand's accession to the Geneva Agreement was a matter that could be decided only at the highest levels of the RTG. If this approach seemed successful, the Secretary continued, it probably would be possible to include Thailand

in the

in the pre-Conference meetings. Secretary Rusk than pointed out, for Young's information, that Thailand already had been "consulted at every turn" and given ample opportunity to present its case at Geneva.)

(See items 22 and 26 June 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 1980, 13 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 2002, 15 Jun 62; Bangkok to SecState, 2000, 15 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62      ACSI requested USARMA Laos for recommendations concerning the advisability of increasing attache strength in Laos so that USARMA might take over some of the functions of the MAAG when the latter organization was withdrawn from Laos. On No. 30      19 June, by means of a joint State-Defense message, Ambassador Brown was given additional details regarding the proposed augmentation of the attache group. The Ambassador was informed that the US Government was considering the assignment of additional personnel in order to: 1) strengthen US intelligence capabilities; 2) provide assistance to USOM in military programming and supply activities; and 3) increase the capabilities for unofficial end-use observation of US military supplies.

(USARMA replied on the 19th, and Ambassador Brown's response followed on the 21st. USARMA, with the Ambassador's approval, advised that it could not effectively assume all MAAG functions, calling particular attention to the recovery of US property and the supervision of Filipino technicians as matters which it should not be required

required to handle. See item 5 July 1962.)

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(S/NOFORN) Msg, ACSI, DA, to USARMA Laos, DA 915536, 141615Z Jun 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, NIACT 1154, 19 Jun 62. (S-NOFORN) Msg, USARMA Laos to ACSI, DA, DA IN 240512-C, 191100Z Jun 62. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1776, 21 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62      Brown delivered letters of congratulation to  
Souvanna from the President and Harriman, in  
No. 31      which they pledged US support of the new Govern-  
ment and expressed their desire to meet with the  
Prince. The Ambassador also renewed a long  
standing invitation to come to the US, which  
Souvanna said he would consider.

Souvanna agreed to Brown's suggestion that he head the Lao delegation to Geneva but added that it would be a good thing if Phoumi remained in Laos during his absence. Brown then told Souvanna that the US was resuming monthly aid payments as a tangible expression of its confidence in this Government (see item 13 June 1962); the Prince made no reply. Souvanna indicated his approval of the recommended return of US dependents to Vientiane and also agreed to Brown's suggestion that he get his own forces into as much territory as possible before the factional armies were ordered to remain in position.

In addition, the Ambassador reported that he had mentioned the matter of the release of the Americans held prisoner and indicated that he intended to take the matter up with Souvanna again at a later date. Brown noted that he had gotten the impression, during his discussion with

Souvanna

Souvanna, that he intended to play some role in the dispute between North and South Viet Nam.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1720, 14 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62     Acting upon a British proposal for a London meeting, just prior to the Geneva Conference session, of the tripartite working group, the Secretary of State, after receiving a French suggestion that the meeting take place at Geneva, advised Ambassador Bruce that the group should meet from 20 to 23 June, preferably in Paris. By coming together in Paris, the representatives of the three powers would be able to confer with Souvanna, who was expected to return from Laos for his daughter's wedding. If, however, the UK, acting on its prerogative as Co-Chairman, insisted upon a London meeting, the group might convene there, adjourn, and hold a second session in Paris.

(On the following day, the British Foreign Office agreed to hold preliminary tripartite talks in London, beginning on 20 June. A second session would begin in Paris no later than 24 June. See item 19-27 June 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to London, PRIORITY 6677, 14 Jun 62; PRIORITY 6681, 15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62     The Vientiane Ambassadors' "Joint Recommendations on the Ceasefire Proclamation," though approved by the US Government, were found unacceptable by the Geneva Working Group (see item 7 March 1962).

The US

The US Charge in Vientiane noted that any further action on the subject lay with the Working Group.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1731,  
15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62      The Laotian National Assembly passed a motion  
No. 34      approving the Plaine des Jarres Agreement (see  
item 12 June 1962). The motion specifically  
gave unconditional approval to the composition  
of the proposed Government, the Troika method  
of administration, and to the manner in which  
the three parties had agreed to set up the pro-  
visional government.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1735,  
15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62      The President approved the \$20 million logistical  
No. 35      support program for Thailand proposed to him by  
Secretary McNamara (see item 12, 13 June 1962),  
on the conditions that: 1) the net US gold  
drain would be limited to \$2 million; 2) move-  
ments of both personnel and materiel would be  
made without publicity; and 3) personnel move-  
ments would be delayed and would not increase  
the number of US personnel assigned to Thailand.  
This last condition would be met by substituting  
construction units for combat units. (The Chair-  
man, JCS, expressed great concern" on 16 June  
over this final condition of the President's  
approval. He feared that the substitution of  
construction units for combat units would weaken  
US combat capability in Thailand "far too  
drastically."

drastically." Nonetheless, the program of exchanging combat troops for construction troops was begun (see items 26 and 29 June 1962).)

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(TS) JCS 2339/77, 20 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

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15 Jun 62      In a Circular telegram to US Ambassadors, the  
No. 36      Department of State outlined the US Government's position in regard to the new Laotian Government (see item 12 June 1962). The Department said that the Lao coalition was acceptable to the US and that the US was therefore prepared to support it to the maximum extent possible. The State Department observed that, despite certain weaknesses, the Laotian cabinet was probably not significantly worse than the one which would have resulted had an agreement been reached several months earlier.

The success of the new government, the Department thought, would depend on the moral and material assistance it would receive from the Free World and on the extent to which non-communist elements in Laos rallied to its support. As evidence of US interest in the welfare of Laos, the State Department noted that the US Government had already resumed financial assistance to Laos in the form of a three million dollar grant (see item 14 June 1962).

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(C) DEPCIRCTEL 2109, 15 Jun 62.

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16 Jun 62      On this date, there were 886 US personnel  
No. 37      assigned to or under the control of MAAG Laos:

293 MAAG



293 MAAG personnel, 444 WSMTT personnel, 147 MTT and other individuals on temporary duty, and 2 technical representatives. In addition, 465 Filipino technicians were in MAAG employ.

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160250Z Jun 62.

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16 Jun 62 CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that, in the period since Nam Tha, MAAG officials had attained closer working relations with the FAR than at any past time. Although all the FAR commanders thought the coalition government would not work, they nevertheless realized that it had to be supported for the present and were eager to have US advisors remain to help them.

In the same report, CHMAAG related that, since Nam Tha, he had withheld MAP equipment for re-equipping the units routed there. Moreover, since the agreement on the coalition government (see item 12 June 1962), he had stopped the import of all ammunition and major items of MAP equipment to the FAR, inasmuch as the FAR already had on hand far more equipment and ammunition than a 20,000-man integration force would require. The only materials CHMAAG was releasing to the FAR were spare parts and essential individual equipment. CHMAAG recommended to CINCPAC that these procedures be continued.

In another message of the same day, CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that ample reserve stocks of ammunition for the FAR were already on hand in Thailand. He suggested that CINCPAC might wish, therefore, to cancel or redirect future

ammunition

ammunition shipments for Laos.

(On 19 June, CINCPAC did take action to reduce the flow of ammunition for Thailand reserve stocks.)

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(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 239711, 16 Jun 62; 160407Z Jun 62; (C) Msg, ADMINO CINCPAC to CHUSAROSASF, et al. DA IN 240346, 19 Jun 62.

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17 Jun 62      Ambassador Brown reported a "major last minute  
No. 39      hitch" in the tripartite negotiations, the  
question whether the Assembly's approval of the  
Plaine des Jarres agreement should be mentioned  
in the royal ordinance designating the new govern-  
ment. The King and Phoumi insisted that it  
should; Souphanouvong, apparently fearing that  
it could provide a legal basis for a future no-  
confidence vote by the Assembly, insisted that it  
should not. The State Department agreed with  
Brown that the specific reference to the assembly  
vote in the royal ordinance was not necessary.

(On 21 June after lengthy discussion  
Phoumi and Souvanna reached agreement on the  
procedures for the installation of the new govern-  
ment.)

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1761, 19 Jun 62; 1768, 20 Jun 62; 1769, 20 Jun 62; 1779, 21 Jun 62; 1780, 21 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1157, 20 Jun 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1740, 17 Jun 62; 1750, 18 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1143, 17 Jun 62.

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19 Jun 62      In his discussions with French President  
No. 40      de Gaulle, Secretary Rusk indicated that the  
State Department had departed from the previous  
Administration's

Administration's unilateral approach to the Laos situation. In line with this new policy, Rusk said, all negotiations concerning the Laos settlement that had taken place at Geneva had been conducted in full concert between the Western Allies. The Secretary emphasized that the US had no intention of negotiating independently of its Allies on questions as important as Laos.

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(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 13, 20 Jun 62.

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19-27  
Jun 62

No. 41

Representatives of the US, UK, and France met in Paris to discuss problems relating to the implementation of the final Geneva agreements. The US was particularly anxious to persuade the French to take advantage of their cordial relationship with Souvanna to get him to accept various US proposals designed to strengthen, and orient toward the West, the integrated Laotian armed forces.

In line with this general philosophy the US delegation proposed that the total Laotian armed forces number 30,000 men including an 11,000 man gendarmerie. It was hoped that an Army of this size would be able to engage infiltrating elements with sufficient vigor to create a situation that clearly indicated the existence of the Communist aggression. A larger force, the US delegation felt, would prove unacceptable to Souvanna and would be too expensive to maintain.

The French, in line with their pessimism regarding the Laotian situation, felt that the

size

size of the forces proposed by the US would be provocative to the Communists and inexpedient in view of the possibility that the Laotian army would not remain neutral. The French suggested instead the creation of a force of 15,000 men including 3,000 gendarmes. Although skeptical about the eventual neutrality of a Laotian Army the French were confident of their ability to aid in the creation of a gendarmerie which would be effective in combating internal Communist subversion. (The question of the Ryan Plan for a Lao National Police was given only passing notice by the conferees. See item 27 November, 14 December 1961.)

Another disagreement arose over the efforts of the US delegation to convince the French of the need to increase the number, and improve the quality of the personnel who were assigned to their Laotian military mission. The US representatives hoped that by making this greater commitment the French could create an elaborate support and maintenance operation patterned after the MAAG; but the American concept was unacceptable to the French who planned to maintain a simple, relatively inexpensive operation which would assist Lao efforts rather than substitute for them.

A recurring issue between the French and US delegations was the continued presence of Filipino technicians in Laos. The US tried to convince the French of the desirability of keeping the Filipinos in Laos, maintaining that their presence would  
supply

supply an additional Western influence. The French objected to the presence of the Filipinos on the grounds that they were not needed, would be unacceptable to Souvanna, and would provide an excuse for the introduction of Viet Minh technicians.

On the question of the integration of the Lao armed forces, the French shared the US desire that the integration process be accomplished within three to six months, if possible. The French, however, considered the Vientiane Ambassadors' text (see items 20 October and 3 November 1961) on integration procedures unduly complicated and suggested the development of a simpler plan.

Summarizing the results of the Paris meetings for Assistant Secretary Nitze, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bundy indicated that the US delegation had failed to shake French convictions concerning the composition of the integrated Laotian Army or the role of the French military mission. Nor had the delegation been able to persuade the French to accept the continued presence of the Filipino technicians. The French, according to Bundy, thought that the Lao must solve their own problems and they showed no inclination to give extensive aid to the new government. Finally, Bundy observed, the French appeared to have given little thought, and to have made no specific plans, concerning their role in Laos during or after the implementation of the Geneva Agreements.

(On 21 June,

(On 21 June, a lower-level Tripartite Working Group met in London to discuss the same issues under study in Paris, and the conferees expressed much the same agreements and disagreements. Reporting this to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Bruce noted with concern that the French seemed willing to delay, until after the Geneva Agreement had gone into effect, reaching a firm agreement with Souvanna concerning their military mission.

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(S) Msgs, DEFREPNAME Paris to OSD, CJCS, DA IN 241164, 19 Jun 62; DA IN 240857, 20 Jun 62; DA IN 241823, 23 Jun 62; DA IN 241852, 23 Jun 62; DA IN 242466, 26 Jun 62; DA IN 242893, 27 Jun 62; DA IN 242961, 27 Jun 62; (S) Msgs, DEFREPNAME to OSD, DA IN 240676, 19 Jun 62; DA IN 240976, 20 Jun 62; (S) Msgs, London to SecState, 4725, 21 Jun 62; 4747, 4748, 4749, 22 Jun 62.

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20 Jun 62      In a discussion between Secretary Rusk and  
French Foreign Minister Couve concerning Laos,  
No. 42      the Secretary stressed the US view that the  
French were in a position to assume the burden  
of bringing Western influence to bear on the new  
Laotian Government.

Couve acknowledged that France was on good terms with Souvanna and noted that the French Government had already started the training and instruction of the Laotian armed forces. Couve also indicated, in response to the Secretary's inquiry, that there had been no objection on the part of the Laotian Government to the French role in military training, but that some difficulty had arisen over the maintenance of French bases in Laos.

The Secretary

The Secretary concluded the discussion by announcing that the US planned to replace Brown with Unger as Ambassador to Laos (see item 28 June 1962). He indicated that the British were probably going to change their ambassador too, and Couve mentioned that France would probably do the same.

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(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, SECTO 2, 20 Jun 62.

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20 Jun 62 Thai Generals Chalermchai, Wallop, and Eksakdi, acting upon Sarit's orders, called upon Ambassador No. 43 Young and presented six questions drafted by Phoumi and forwarded to the Thai Prime Minister. These queries concerned: 1) the course of action which Phoumi should adopt once the coalition had taken office; 2) Phoumi's reaction to the signing of the Geneva Agreements; 3) Phoumi's response to any effort by Souvanna to employ Chinese Communist or Viet Minh military advisers; 4) US reaction in the event that other foreign contingents were not withdrawn from Laos; 5) the US plan for the withdrawal of its MAAG from Laos; and 6) US policy regarding the support of such "underground" elements as the Meos and Khas.

In response, the Ambassador reviewed briefly the plans for a phased US withdrawal which would be linked to ICC verification of the withdrawal of other foreign units. Young, in general, neither refused to answer nor offered complete explanations. Since Sarit might be expected to seek further information concerning US plans, the Ambassador

the Ambassador requested Departmental guidance concerning the replies which he should give.

(See items 21, 23, and 28 June 1962.)

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2034, 20 Jun 62.

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21 Jun 62      During a meeting with Ambassador Young, Sarit  
disclosed the contents of a telegram in which  
No. 44      Phoumi asked, among other things, that Thailand  
lift its ban on commodities entering Laos. In  
this same message, Phoumi repeated his request  
for information concerning US policy (see item  
20 June 1962) and asked Sarit to seek from the  
US badly needed "'funds to assist in political  
activity.'" The Thai Prime Minister thereupon  
had requested from Phoumi an explanation of these  
political operations.

Phoumi's message also stated that Souvanna  
and Souphanouvong had clashed over the manner  
in which the members of the coalition government  
should take the oath of office. Both Phoumi and  
the King had insisted that a delegation from the  
National Assembly should be present at the  
ceremony, as the Lao constitution required. Al-  
though Souvanna had agreed in principle, Souphan-  
ouvong had refused to observe this constitutional  
provision.

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(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2042, 21  
Jun 62.

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22 Jun 62

No. 45

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

Ambassador

[REDACTED]

22 Jun 62      Ambassador Young informed the Department of  
No. 46      State that the RTG appeared unwilling to sign  
the Geneva Agreement. Because the Sarit govern-  
ment seemed intransigent, the Ambassador recom-  
mended that the US consider some alternative to  
Thai ratification, such as a unilateral decla-  
ration by Thailand of adherence to the agreement.  
Such a declaration, the Ambassador believed, would  
take the place of Thailand's signing the Geneva  
Agreement and, if accompanied by similar state-  
ments by other adherents to the Manila Pact,  
would accomplish the purpose of a formal recog-  
nition by SEATO of Lao independence and neutrality.

(Acting Secretary of State Ball on 24 June  
replied that, should the RTG refuse to sign the  
Geneva Agreement, the Communists might demand the  
withdrawal of US forces from Thailand. "If Sarit  
has any sense," Ball declared, "he will not want  
to withdraw at this time." Young was then in-  
structed to use this argument at his discretion.)

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2068, 22 Jun  
62; SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 2065, 24 Jun 62.

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23 Jun 62      The Provisional Government of National Union  
No. 47      (see item 12 June 1962) was officially installed  
at Vientiane, and Prince Souvanna presented the  
members of his new government to the King. In  
his inaugural address Souvanna pledged that the  
government would follow a path of peace and  
neutrality

neutrality in conformity with "the interests and aspirations of the Lao people and the Geneva Accords of 1962 in order to build a peaceful, neutral, independent, unified, democratic and prosperous Laos." He listed the following immediate tasks facing his Government: 1) to form a delegation to participate in the international conference for the settlement of the Lao question; 2) to honor commitments undertaken in the name of Laos at the forthcoming international conference and rigorously execute the Geneva Accords of 1962 and the accords agreed among the three parties; 3) to establish a cease-fire and release all prisoners; 4) to unify the administrative organs and military forces of the nation, and to prepare for the election of a national assembly looking to the formation of a "definitive government"; and 5) to establish diplomatic relations with "various" countries.

According to Ambassador Brown, Souvanna's statement followed generally the terms of the Zurich and Plaine des Jarres Accords with one significant exception: Souvanna made a specific reference to the non-recognition of SEATO protection. Phoumi, however, caught this phrase and persuaded Souvanna to delete it from the official press account since it was contrary to their agreements.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1795, 23 Jun 62; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1783, 22 Jun 62; 1788 and 1794, 23 Jun 62.

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At CINCPAC's

23 Jun 62

No. 48

At CINCPAC's request, CHMAAG Laos submitted a progress report on efforts to develop a guerrilla force capable of effectively interdicting the Communist supply route through Mu Gia Pass (see item 23 February 1962). CHMAAG reported that the guerrilla forces currently in being were not yet capable of directly interdicting either the Nape or Mu Gia Pass. However, MAAG said that the Lao resistance group [REDACTED] west of Mu Gia along Route 12 had expanded from three to six units during the past three months and had had some success in interdicting Route 12 in the rear of the Communist forces in the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area.

CHMAAG estimated that three or four months would be required before the guerrilla forces could be developed to the point where they would be capable of restricting, to any significant extent, enemy traffic through the Pass.

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(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS et al., DA IN 229646, 14 May 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 241797C, 23 Jun 62.

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23 Jun 62

No. 49

The Acting Secretary of State informed the American Embassy at Vientiane that Phoumi should be encouraged to deal directly with the Embassy, even though Ambassador Brown's successor had not yet arrived. For this reason, Embassy officials were provided with a general response to the questions which Phoumi, through Sarit, had submitted to the US Ambassador to Thailand (see item 20 June 1962).

In brief

In brief, the Embassy was to urge Phoumi to establish, as quickly as possible, a close working relationship with Souvanna and the neutral center in order to resist the extension of Pathet Lao influence. Phoumi should also strengthen the FAR and accept MAAG advice so that his force would be prepared to face the Pathet Lao during the period of integration and after the withdrawal of the MAAG. Finally, Phoumi should assist the ICC and attempt to insure its freedom of action. In any event, he would not be expected to deal with the possible problem of the introduction of Communist military advisers.

Embassy officers, at their discretion, might discuss general plans for the withdrawal of the MAAG. Phoumi, however, was not to be informed of the planned US reaction to a Communist refusal to withdraw Chinese or Viet Minh contingents. No mention would be made of the future role of the Meo or Kha, although Phoumi could be told that the US hoped to alleviate suffering among the tribes and to prevent reprisals. During these talks, Embassy officers were to attempt to discover for what political activity Phoumi desired funds (see item 21 June 1962).

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 23 Jun 62.

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24 Jun 62      The Provisional Government of Nation Union held  
its first Cabinet meeting and among other things  
No. 50      appointed a delegation, headed by Quinim Pholsena,  
to participate

to participate in the Geneva Conference. The new government also declared that it would enter upon its duties immediately and, to show that "national harmony has been established," would proclaim at noon the absolute cessation of all hostilities in Laos.

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(U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1796, 24 Jun 62; 1842, 29 Jun 62.

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25 Jun 62      At a Secretary of Defense-JCS meeting, the Secretary and all others present agreed that

No. 51      no financial support should be given the new RLG until all US prisoners held by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh had been released. Assistant Secretary Nitze was instructed by Secretary McNamara to present this view to Assistant Secretary of State Harriman.

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(TS) Note to Control Div., 25 Jun 62; JMF 5410 (62).

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26 Jun 62      As of this date, 8567 of the 9508 US troops ordered to Thailand (see items 13 May 1962

No. 52      et seq.) had arrived there. Since the end of May (see item 22 May 1962) nearly 2,000 troops had arrived.

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(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 070018Z Jun 62; 132246Z Jun 62; DA IN 241458, 20 Jun 62; 272345Z Jun 62.

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26 Jun 62      As instructed by the Acting Secretary of State, Ambassador Young delivered to Sarit a message

No. 53      in which President Kennedy congratulated the Thai Prime Minister for his acceptance of the

International

~~TOP SECRET~~

International Court of Justice and called upon Thailand to participate in both the Geneva Conference and the pre-Conference strategy meetings. Sarit, who seemed pleased by the message, confirmed that the Thai Ambassador at Berne had been instructed to attend the pre-Conference meeting.

The Prime Minister added, however, that he and Thanat had not yet decided whether Thailand should take part in the Conference itself. Their recommendation, moreover, would have to be studied by the cabinet before any Governmental decision was made. Ambassador Young nevertheless believed that, thanks to Sarit, the US was "at least on a take-off with the RTG on a Geneva course."

During the conversation, Sarit reiterated his grave concern over the Communist menace in Laos. Thanat told Young that the RTG's fears seemed on the verge of being realized, since Souphanouvong was serving as Acting Premier and Phoumi Vongvichit had begun denouncing the presence of US troops in Thailand. Because of Sarit's apprehension, the Ambassador asked for guidance concerning the Department's plans in the event the Communists made an issue of the US deployment.

(On 27 June, Acting Secretary Ball authorized Young to assure Sarit, if necessary, that the US would reject any Communist attempt to link the Laotian settlement to the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand.)

~~TOP SECRET~~

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2086, 26 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, 2092, 27 Jun 62.

26 Jun 62

No. 54

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

26 Jun 62

No. 55

Acting Secretary of State Ball informed Ambassador Young that the President had decided to change the "character" of US forces in Thailand in a manner that would not weaken the over-all US military capability in the area. To this end, the President had authorized a strengthening of logistic support accompanied by the withdrawal of certain combat units. Approximately 1,000 Marines stationed at Udorn would be withdrawn and later replaced by 1,700 Army Engineers. Other components would be recalled as conditions might dictate. As a result of the removal of some combat forces, Mr. Ball explained, the US would regain the ability to recommit the troops, if necessary, as a renewed diplomatic warning.

Although the decisions to withdraw certain contingents and to strengthen logistic support were "firm"



were "firm," the President nevertheless desired Young's advice on timing and on the method of explaining the decisions to Sarit. The Ambassador was informed that the redeployment, which would begin no later than 4 July, would probably be explained to the public as an effort to utilize most effectively the forces involved. No immediate public announcement of the logistic reinforcements was planned, but the decision probably would be "explained in terms of economic development."

On the following day, Ambassador Young submitted his suggestions for the timing and method of informing the Thai of the US move. On 28 May the Acting Secretary of State approved most of Young's proposed tactics, but asked Young to emphasize to Sarit that the reasons for the transfer were "diplomatic . . . and not negotiable." The US, while avoiding any lessening of its ability to react, was taking steps which could be interpreted by the Communists as an effort to ease tensions. Since the Marines could, if necessary, return on 48-hour notice, the US, by withdrawing this force, would preserve its freedom to "invoke precisely the same level of deterrent action if the situation sours." The US could thus reestablish the previous deterrent without running the risk of escalation.

(See item 29 June 1962.)

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(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 2083, 26 Jun 62; NIACT 2094, 28 Jun 62; Bangkok to SecState, 2100, 27 Jun 62; 2110, 27 Jun 62.

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Souvanna

26-30  
Jun 62

No. 56

Souvanna arrived in Paris and in response to Foreign Office inquiries denied any responsibility for a statement by his Minister of Information, Phoumi Vongvichit, calling for the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand. In further talks with the Foreign Office on the 28th Souvanna indicated that he thought it possible that the Geneva Conference would be ended by mid-July and that he could see no objections to the presence of the French Military Mission in Laos. Souvanna, however, was not at all agreeable to including a statement concerning the reunification of the Lao armed forces in the Neutrality Declaration. He thought that this was an internal matter that should be settled by the coalition government.

Souvanna did express his willingness to exclude any mention of SEATO from the Declaration provided the SEATO nations announced, sometime prior to the issuance of the Declaration, their intention to respect the RLG's desire not to recognize the protection of any military alliance.

After speaking with Souvanna on the 30th, Harriman reported that "he appeared all right on [the] inclusion of integration and demobilization in [the] Lao declaration." Harriman also noted that Souvanna had definitely accepted the US invitation to return to Laos via Washington when the Conference concluded.

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 6254, 26 Jun 62;  
(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 6309, 29 Jun 62;  
6351, 30 Jun 62.

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CINCPAC

27 Jun 62      CINCPAC warned COMUSMACV that the Viet Minh, might foresee a slowdown or shutdown in the use of their corridor through Laos to South Viet Nam resulting from coming developments regarding Laos; they might therefore attempt to "rush" Viet Cong into South Viet Nam before any international supervisory machinery could be put into operation. He recommended that COMUSMACV point out this danger to South Vietnamese authorities, urging them to increase their vigilance along the Lao border.

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(S) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 270500Z Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62      President Kennedy announced the nomination of Leonard Unger, Deputy Chief of Mission and Consul at Bangkok, to replace Winthrop Brown as Ambassador to Laos. Unger's appointment was confirmed by the Senate on 30 June 1962.

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NYT, 29 Jun 62, p. 4:7; 30 Jun 62, p. 8:4.

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28 Jun 62      Ambassador Young informed the Department of State that Sarit was "pressing" for answers to the six questions asked by Phoumi concerning US plans for Laos (see item 20 June 1962). Young had told the Prime Minister that no instructions had yet arrived upon which he might base a reply. Although willing to encourage Phoumi to deal directly with the American Embassy in Vientiane instead of using Sarit as an intermediary, Ambassador Young nevertheless expected the Thai Government to continue to take an active interest in Lao affairs.

affairs. For this reason, Young believed it would be helpful to inform the RTG, in a general way, of the conduct which the US expected of Phoumi (see item 23 June 1962).

(On the following day, Secretary Rusk authorized Young to make such an explanation to Sarit. The Ambassador, however, was not to discuss Phoumi's request for funds (see item 21 June 1962), since the Department had not yet been informed of the type of political activity that Phoumi had in mind. "At this stage," remarked the Secretary, "we are primarily focusing our attention on ascertaining the precise nature of the aid which Souvanna hopes to obtain from us.")

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 21111, 28 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, 2107, 29 Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62      During a visit by the Philippine Foreign Minister  
Pelaez to the US, State Department officials  
No. 60      attempted to clarify the US position regarding  
a Laotian settlement and, in particular, to  
explain US unhappiness over the Phoumi mission  
to the Philippines (see item 29 May 1962).

The Foreign Minister during his visit mentioned that Philippine President Macapagal, although hopeful that the Laos coalition would work, was skeptical as to its ultimate success. Pelaez also pointed out that he opposed Laotian renunciation of the SEATO protection. Harriman explained that the severance of ties with SEATO was necessary to obtain Soviet assent to the agreement

the agreement. The renunciation was, in fact, not too significant, for Laos would always have the opportunity of calling for military support from the various members of SEATO as individual nations. Harriman also expressed the US hope that the Philippines would send a token unit to Thailand.

Pelaez indicated that the Filipino instructors in Laos might possibly be transferred from the FAR to the RLG in the event that the Geneva settlement prohibited their remaining in their present positions. In conclusion, Harriman indicated that the Department would endeavor to keep the Government of the Philippines more fully informed on US Laotian policy.

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(C) SecState to Manila, 1609, 28 Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62

No. 61

[REDACTED] also recommended that the training of additional units under the MAAG be pursued as rapidly as possible to take full advantage of the period of 75 days after the signing of the Geneva agreements during which the MAAG would be permitted to remain in Laos. They emphasized that the training should attempt 1) to provide suitable cadres for trail-watching teams in South Laos and along the Laos-Viet Nam border, and 2) hopefully to establish a base for

continued

continued operations in the Bolovens Plateau area.

(See item 19 July 1962.)

~~TOP SECRET~~

28 Jun 62      During a meeting between members of the French  
No. 62      and American delegations at Geneva, the French  
delegation announced that Souvanna had readily  
agreed to the continued presence of a French  
Military Mission in Laos. The Prince had also  
said that, unless there were assurances by all  
SEATO members that the organization accepted the  
Lao renunciation of SEATO military protection,  
he would have to bring the matter up at a future  
Conference meeting. The French delegation further  
related that Souvanna had indicated that he al-  
ready had said enough about the demobilization  
and integration of Lao forces. Souvanna added,  
however, that he would consider a French suggestion  
that he make further reference to the disposition  
of Lao forces at Geneva in order to provide a  
basis for ICC competence in this field.

In commenting on Souvanna's remarks, the  
French delegation declared that it was unlikely  
that a cease-fire proclamation including refer-  
ence to the "Private Armies" could be obtained  
before the final signature of the Geneva agree-  
ments. The desired reference, however, might be  
included, in spite of Communist objections, in  
the Lao declaration of neutrality.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1156,  
28 Jun 62.

Ambassador

29 Jun 62      Ambassador Young and General Harkins called upon Sarit and his advisers and informed the Thai officials of President Kennedy's decision to alter the composition of US forces in Thailand (see item 26 June 1962). Sarit agreed to the redeployment of 1,000 Marines and to the draft US announcement of this decision.

No. 63

The Thai Prime Minister also agreed in principle to the US program to improve logistical facilities in Thailand. Sarit suggested, however, that the US, when it chose to announce the logistic support program, should indicate that the resultant improvements would support US military action in Thailand in addition to benefitting the Thai economy.

Also on the 29th, CINCPAC, acting on instructions from the JCS, ordered CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACTHAI to begin the withdrawal on 2 July.

(The withdrawal was completed on 7 July.)

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(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2113, 29 Jun 62; 2119, 30 Jun 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5165, 29 Jun 62; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACTHAI, 290433Z Jun 62. (TS) SEA SITREP, No 28, 11 Jul 62.

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29 Jun 62      Ambassador Gavin informed the State Department that Souvanna reportedly had told the French Ambassador to South Viet Nam that he intended to give full diplomatic recognition to the DRV. When the French diplomat raised the possibility that, as a result of this action, SVN would refuse "representation" in Laos, Souvanna replied that this was too bad, but he had no choice.

No. 64

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(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 6314, 29 Jun 62.

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The UK

29 Jun 62      The UK Delegation's Legal Advisor suggested to  
the US Delegation at Geneva that signature by  
No. 65      the US and UK of the Geneva agreements might  
imply recognition of North Viet Nam and, in the  
case of the US, also Communist China unless the  
Agreement contained a specific statement to the  
contrary. The US delegation replied that agree-  
ments growing out of negotiations such as those  
at Geneva did not imply recognition and that no  
reservation was therefore necessary. The UK  
Legal Advisor, however, was not satisfied and  
suggested that British misgivings would be re-  
lieved if, as a minimum, a statement denying the  
imputation of recognition were included in the  
final draft.

(See item 5 July 1962.)

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(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1163,  
29 Jun 62.

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30 Jun 62      Ambassador Brown reported that according to the  
RLG Director of Protocol, the Lao Government  
No. 66      approved "in principle" requests from the govern-  
ments of Communist China, East Germany, and  
Poland to establish diplomatic relations and ex-  
change representatives at the ambassadorial level.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1848,  
30 Jun 62.

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30 Jun 62      At its second meeting, the cabinet of the new  
Provisional Government of National Union agreed  
No. 67      on the establishment of a mixed cease-fire com-  
mittee, composed of three members from each  
political



political faction. Also established were commissions, with one member from each political group, to study procedures for the military and administrative unification of Laos. The Cabinet also discussed finance and foreign aid and "urgent questions concerning the majority of ministerial departments."

The US mission reported that the consensus of opinion in Vientiane was that installation procedures of the Provisional Government had thus far worked more smoothly and with fewer recriminations and problems than might have been expected. It was, however, too soon to predict to what extent the new government would be able to operate effectively under the cumbersome Troika systems that were rapidly being applied at all levels of government.

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(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1847, 30 Jun 62; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1850, 30 Jun 62.

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30 Jun  
3 Jul 62

No. 58

According to an AP dispatch carried by the Bangkok Post, Interior Minister Pheng Phonsavan disclosed on 2 July that the Soviet Union had offered to provide Laos with material aid including food, fabrics, and other commodities worth \$600,000, and that the RLG Cabinet at its 30 June meeting had asked Vice Premier Phoumi Nosavan to study the offer and report on it at the next cabinet meeting.

On 3 July Acting Prime Minister Souphanouvong announced at a press interview that a large shipment of Soviet aid materials had just arrived in

Hanoi

Hanoi and would soon be shipped to Vientiane or  
the Plaine des Jarres.

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(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, A-7,  
14 Jul 62.

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1. After

JULYSummary of Major Subjects

1. After resolving the remaining issues, such as the future relationship of SEATO to Laos, the delegations at Geneva arrived at agreements designed to insure the neutrality and independence of that kingdom.

Nos. 6, 8, 9, 21.

2. During July, the Lao coalition continued to struggle with such problems as the establishment of diplomatic relations with both Communist and non-Communist nations and the unification of the political factions that had divided the kingdom.

Nos. 2, 3, 7, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25.

3. The US Government turned its attention to the future of Laos, receiving Souvanna in Washington and laying plans for future economic aid.

Nos. 2, 12, 14, 24.

4. The future of MAAG Laos, its impending withdrawal, and its replacement by a French Military Mission were studied by US officials.

Nos. 5, 15, 20.

5. The task of altering the composition of US forces in Thailand continued.

Nos. 2, 11, 13, 22.

6. By means of a well-equipped and mobile ICC, as well as through information obtained by American and indigenous personnel, the US hoped to verify the withdrawal of Viet Minh forces and detect any future effort by the Communist to infiltrate through Laos into South Viet Nam.

Nos. 1, 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 22, 23, 26.



2 Jul 62

No. 1

[REDACTED] plans for the relocation of Thakhek guerrilla units following the formation of a Lao coalition. Although the exact locations to be assigned the various units had not in every case been specified, [REDACTED] move all of them to secure areas east and southeast of Thakhek where they would be astride the avenue of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Viet Nam. Most of the units [REDACTED] be supplied overland from Thakhek, but in some areas the aerial delivery of supplies would be necessary. The USOM, it was hoped, could assist in the dropping of supplies.

[REDACTED]

2 Jul 62

No. 2

During a meeting at Geneva, Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin, after reading a message to Harriman in which Premier Khrushchev called for continued cooperation between the US and USSR, advised the American diplomat that the integration of Lao armed forces and the demobilization of excess personnel were matters to be settled by the RLG. Other topics mentioned during this private session were the presence of US forces in Thailand and the need for further private sessions to resolve difficulties that might arise during meetings between the Co-Chairmen. In commenting on the US forces in Thailand, Harriman referred Pushkin to newspaper accounts of the decision to withdraw 1,000 Marines (see items 26 and 29 June 1962).

When

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(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1176, 3 Jul 62; CONF 1177, 3 Jul 62.

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2 Jul 62      When questioned about the RLG's policy regarding diplomatic relations with other governments,  
  
No. 3      Foreign Minister Khamsouk Keola informed a representative of the US Embassy that Laos, because it was a small, neutral state that required assistance from foreign nations, would honor requests by all governments for the establishment of diplomatic relations. When advised that West Germany probably would sever its diplomatic ties with Laos if recognition were granted to East German, Khamsouk said that there nevertheless would be no exceptions to the policy of extending recognition to all that requested it.

(On 8 July, the US delegation at Geneva advised the Secretary of State that, although it would be difficult to convince the RLG that any East German bid for recognition should be spurned, the presence in Laos of representatives of prosperous West Germany was definitely desirable. Four days later, Ambassador Unger added his recommendation that West Germany be encouraged to maintain some form of diplomatic representation at Vientiane, even though the RLG should recognize the East German regime.)

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1195, 8 Jul 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2, 2 Jul 62; Vientiane to SecState, 43, 12 Jul 62.

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4 Jul 62      In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC  
  
No. 4      stated that he had no credible evidence to  
  
substantiate

substantiate newspaper stories that 8,000-9,000 North Vietnamese were moving from the Laotian Panhandle into South Viet Nam.

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(S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5223, 041914Z Jul 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 050042Z Jul 62.

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5 Jul 62

No. 5

The Secretary of Defense, anticipating the withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos, sent to the JCS a memorandum in which he expressed his desire that the DIA make plans to augment as soon as possible the number of US military attaches in that kingdom (see item 14 June 1962). The Secretary believed that the additional service attaches would be required in order to: 1) increase US intelligence coverage in Laos; 2) provide assistance to the USOM in the conduct of any functions formerly assigned to the MAAG; 3) observe the utilization of US equipment; and 4) maintain close liaison with the French Military Mission and other Allied military assistance agencies in Laos.

In response to a JCS request for comments on the Secretary's plan, CINCPAC in messages sent on 12, 15, and 28 July recommended that: 1) attache strength should be increased to the extent necessary to provide both the desired intelligence and the liaison that would be necessary between Vientiane and Bangkok; 2) the military attaches should not take over those MAAG functions relating to administration of the MAP; and 3) a non-resident MAAG should be established at Bangkok to cooperate with AID, Laos, in the procurement, storage, and distribution of MAP materiel.

(On 3 August

(On 3 August, the JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum in which they recommended: 1) the augmentation of the attache effort in Laos for the purpose of gathering intelligence; 2) the establishment of a non-resident MAAG Laos in Thailand; and 3) augmentation of US AID, Laos. The Secretary of Defense on 11 August informed the JCS that he had approved, in general, the concept they had advanced. Instead of establishing the non-resident MAAG as a separate entity, however, the Department of Defense would assign additional men to JUSMAG Thailand. Although the additional element would deal with Laos, it would have no external identification with that kingdom.)

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(S) SecDef memo for the JCS, Subj: Augmentation of Military Attache Strength in Laos (U); (S) JCSM-558-62, 3 Aug 62, derived from JCS 2344/59; (S) JCS 2344/58, 6 Jul 62; all in JMF 9155.2/5195 (5 Jul 62). (S/NOFORN) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5265, 092336Z Jul 62. (S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 120411Z Jul 62; 150015Z Jul 62; 282232Z Jul 62.

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5 Jul 62

No. 6

In a message to the US delegation at Geneva, the Secretary of State defended the proposition that the conclusion of a multilateral treaty to which a non-recognized regime was party did not imply recognition of that party. This principle had often been stated by the British in previous multilateral treaties, and if the UK should decide to issue a unilateral statement at the conclusion of the Geneva conference incorporating this principle the US would be willing to associate itself with such a declaration. It would

would be preferable, the Secretary concluded, for the British Foreign Secretary to make such a statement as Co-Chairman, thus obviating the necessity of US affirmation.

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(C) Msg, SecState to US Mission Geneva, 928, 5 Jul 62.

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7 Jul 62

No. 7

The Lao Government directed the formation of three integrated battalions to be under the control of the cease-fire committee, a body on which the three political factions were equally represented. Each battalion was to include one company from each of these three factions. In addition, command of the battalions was to be rotated among the political groups. One battalion was to be stationed at Vientiane, another at Luang Prabang, and the third at Xieng Khouang. The directive, however, was not carried out. Rather than permit an FAR company on the Plaine des Jarres, Souphanouvong ordered the withdrawal of the companies he had dispatched to Vientiane and Luang Prabang. Small guard detachments, however, were left behind.

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(S) Msgs, USARMA Laos to DEPTAR, DA IN 245916, 100732Z Jul 62; DA IN 248469, 190530Z Jul 62. (TS/NOFORN) SEA SITREP No. 30-62, 29 Jul 62.

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9 Jul 62

No. 8

The problem of SEATO's relationship to a neutral Laos was resolved by the Geneva Conference when the Communist delegations accepted the Laotian proposal to add the phrase "including SEATO" to its disavowal of military alliances. Initially, the Communists



~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~TOP SECRET~~

the Communists had demanded that SEATO amend its protocol to exclude any mention of protection for Laos in addition to the Laotian declaration. They finally accepted, however, the renunciation of SEATO protection originally proposed by Souvanna, an acceptance that was interpreted by US officials as a "considerable retreat" from the Communists' original position. The US, UK, France, and Thailand also were willing to accept Souvanna's proposal, and the US was working to enlist the support of other SEATO countries.

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(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1191, 7 Jul 62; CONF 1203, 9 Jul 62; Bangkok to SecState, 52, 9 Jul 62, 12, 10 Jul 62; SecState to Bangkok et al., 27, 8 Jul 62.

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10 Jul 62

No. 9

After receiving a letter in which President Kennedy requested South Viet Nam to accept the agreements being negotiated at Geneva, President Diem, through his Foreign Minister, informed Ambassador Nolting that South Viet Nam still desired certain clarifications of the suggested powers of the ICC. In addition, President Diem sought some means to avoid full diplomatic recognition of North Viet Nam by the new Government of Laos. Nolting, however, was confident that the Diem government would accept the agreements once it was fully satisfied that the ICC actually could control the withdrawal of Viet Minh troops from Laos.

(On 11 July, members of the US and South Vietnamese delegations conferred at Geneva. During this meeting, the South Vietnamese disclosed

disclosed that the "clarification" sought by Diem consisted of a clause giving the ICC sufficient authority to control the withdrawal of foreign para-military units stationed in Laos. Although the South Vietnamese eventually agreed that the language of the protocol was adequate, they indicated that nevertheless they would ask Souvanna's representative to insert a clause dealing with para-military forces. The possible establishment of diplomatic ties between Laos and North Viet Nam was not discussed.)

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(S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 35, 10 Jul 62; Saigon to SecState, 26, 11 Jul 62; Geneva to SecState, CONF 1222, 12 Jul 62. (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 1223, 12 Jul 62.

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10 Jul 62      The Secretary of State, in a message to the US  
No. 10      Ambassador at Vientiane and to the Geneva dele-  
gation, renewed the US offer of equipment for the  
ICC (see items 17 June 1961, 21-22 June 1961 and  
19 July 1961). The US was willing to turn over  
to the RLG six helicopters and two liaison air-  
craft, all of which were already in Laos. This  
equipment, to be flown and serviced by French  
airmen, would be under the complete control of  
the ICC.

Because Souvanna was absent from the king-  
dom at the time of the US offer, the RLG did not  
decide until 14 August to accept from American  
sources aircraft needed by the ICC. On the  
following day, a formal offer of helicopters was  
made by the US Government, but this time only  
four of the craft were offered. On 3 September,

Ambassador

Ambassador Unger and Avtar Singh, Secretary-General of the ICC, executed the necessary agreement of sale, and effective the following morning the helicopters passed to ICC control. Heavy maintenance of the craft was to be performed by Air America.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 214, 14 Aug 62. (C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 27, 10 Jul 62; PRIORITY 191, 15 Aug 62; Vientiane to SecState, 119, 25 Jul 62; 132, 27 Jul 62; 333, 3 Sep 62.

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11 Jul 62      During an informal discussion at Geneva, Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin told Harriman of the concern  
No. 11      felt by the USSR regarding the presence in Thailand of a large US contingent. Harriman replied that the original deployment had been in response to the attack by the Pathet Lao on Nam Tha. Moreover, the recent decision to withdraw 1,000 Marines (see item 26 June 1962) was proof that the US did not intend to establish permanent garrisons along the Thai-Lao frontier.

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(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1233, 13 Jul 62.

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17 Jul 62      A Joint State/AID message outlined for Ambassador Brown the "tentative current Washington thinking"  
No. 12      on economic aid for Laos. According to this message, the US intended to discuss with Souvanna a total Project Assistance program of \$25 million, including \$8.6 million previously obligated for the Nam Cadinh Road. The US was also prepared to contribute \$14-18 million in non-project assistance. In the event that US assistance and contributions from other countries failed

failed to meet the essential requirements of RLG, the US would consider supplementary cash grants. An elaborate system was also proposed to insure US control of all funds made available to the RLG.

These contributions, the message continued, reflected the US belief that an aid relationship which would underwrite RLG economic stability by simply meeting budget deficits or maintaining the value of the kip would destroy RLG incentive to collect revenues, control budget expenditures, and manage its foreign exchange effectively. The RLG, not the US, must assume the primary responsibility for the economic prosperity and stability of Laos.

Although these new arrangements might involve lengthy negotiations, the Secretary considered the \$3 million July 1962 economic assistance for Laos to be the terminal grant under existing arrangements.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 75, 17 Jul 62.

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17 Jul 62

No. 13

Secretary Rusk informed the US Ambassador to Thailand that President Kennedy, acting upon a recommendation by the Ambassador himself, had decided to adjust the rotation of US forces in Thailand, the possibility of which had already been mentioned to the Thai Ambassador to the US. CINCPAC, Secretary Rusk continued, had been instructed to hold the remaining Marine units beyond the tentative rotation date of 20 July, after

after which the troops would be withdrawn without provision for their replacement. Thus, the President would be able to announce the withdrawal shortly after the signing on 23 July of the Geneva Agreements and in this manner to indicate a further easing of tensions in Southeast Asia. If, however, the US Ambassador felt that the proposed withdrawal might cause Thailand to refuse to sign the Geneva accords, he might wait until 25 July before revealing the US plan to Sarit.

(Although the Thai Foreign Minister indicated as early as 19 July that his nation probably would sign the Geneva Agreements, Ambassador Young waited until the accords had been signed before explaining the US plan to Sarit. In anticipation of the Ambassador's action, the JCS on 25 July directed CINCPAC to prepare to implement the withdrawal so that the first plane-load of Marine combat personnel would depart within 48 hours after receipt of the order of execution. The withdrawal of personnel and air transportable equipment was scheduled to be completed within an additional 48 hours. During an audience granted to the US Ambassador on 27 July, the Thai Prime Minister raised no objection to the withdrawal, but he implied that any protest on his part would have been futile. The US Government on the same day announced that the withdrawal was underway; the last of the Marine combat personnel departed from Thailand on the morning of 31 July.)

The State

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(TS) SEA SITREP No. 31-62, 31 Jul 62. (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 101, 16 Jul 62, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 97, 17 Jul 62. (LOU) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 143, 27 Jul 62. (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 5432, 251659Z Jul 62, JCS 9158/3440 (24 Jul 62).

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18 Jul 62      The State Department notified the US Embassy  
in Vientiane that the cash grant of \$3 million  
No. 14      to the RLG had been approved.

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(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 80, 18  
Jul 62.

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18-31  
Jul 62      On 18 July Secretary Rusk in a message to Amba-  
sador Unger outlined a State Department plan  
No. 15      designed to enable the US to utilize the full  
75-day period for the withdrawal of the MAAG and  
also to insure that the ICC remained active during  
the 30-day period allotted to the RLG by the  
Geneva Agreement for the determination of with-  
drawal routes. By keeping the MAAG and ICC in  
Laos as long as possible the State Department  
hoped to utilize to the fullest these sources of  
intelligence on Communist activities. In order  
to achieve this objective the State Department  
intended to request the Canadians to use their  
position on the ICC to ensure that MAAG and ICC  
be allowed to remain in Laos for the maximum  
period.

In the event that the Viet Minh withdrew  
before the establishment of withdrawal routes  
the US planned to insist on ICC determination of  
Viet Minh withdrawal routes anyway in order to  
keep the ICC in Laos as long a possible. By so  
insisting,

insisting, the US intended to give the ICC the maximum opportunity to determine to what extent the Communists were living up to their obligations under the Geneva Agreements and also to obtain ICC support for the US contention that the Viet Minh had in fact been present in Laos during the hostilities. The Secretary's plan also called for the US Mission in Geneva to request the Canadian and Indian members of the ICC to press for the establishment of the withdrawal points in areas where the Viet Minh was most active.

The State Department also suggested that the Embassy set up an expanded intelligence gathering network to obtain the best possible information on the Viet Minh withdrawal. The Department also passed along the following State-Defense suggestions as to desirable routes for the withdrawal of the Viet Minh:

- 1) From Tchepone to Mahaxay and east over Route 12 to North Viet Nam.
- 2) From Xieng Khouang east over Route 7.
- 3) From Xieng Khouang north to Sam Neua and thence toward Hanoi over the new road.
- 4) From Phong Saly north over the new road.

On 31 July Ambassador Unger informed the State Department that he would undertake to expand his intelligence gathering facilities using the MAAG, ARMA, and the French Military Mission, but pointed out that there was no overt US intelligence capability in the areas occupied by the Viet Minh, and that it was not likely that one would be developed within the 75-day withdrawal

withdrawal period. Therefore, the Ambassador reported, it was unrealistic to think that any of the various US agencies in Laos would be able to gather much intelligence information. The US, he said, would have to continue to rely for information concerning the Viet Minh on the FAR and the Government of South Viet Nam. The Ambassador thought that the presence of the ICC teams would not improve the situation very much, if at all.

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(S) Msgs, SecState to US Mission Geneva, FECON 980, 16 Jul 62; SecState to Geneva FECON 994, 18 Jul 62; SecState to Vientiane, 95, 21 Jul 62; Vientiane to SecState, 148, 31 Jul 62.

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19 Jul 62

[REDACTED] the future use of Kha units in Laos.

No. 16

[REDACTED] the three Kha units offering the best potential and security could not be counted upon to fight except in their home areas. For this reason, the three units should be prepared to: 1) establish defensive perimeters in the Bolovens area; 2) serve as guides should it become necessary to send South Vietnamese paramilitary teams into the area to prevent Viet Cong infiltration; and 3) act as trail watchers to detect Viet Cong infiltration of South Viet Nam.

Another loyal Kha unit had been forced from its home area and was training in a refugee center near Saravane. If this group was allowed to return to its villages, it too could provide

guides



guides and trail watchers. In its present location, however, the unit had only limited potential.

Seven other units, although not considered reliable, could provide loyal individuals who might prove valuable either as trail watchers or as "staybehind" against the possibility that the Lao coalition might fail. Still another unit was directly controlled by the FAR and would pass under the control of the Souvanna regime, thus forfeiting its security.

[REDACTED]

19-20  
Jul 62

No. 17

In a series of talks with US Embassy officials, Phoumi warned that "a drift toward the left had seemingly begun." He pointed to Souphanouvong's attempts to establish Bloc embassies in Vientiane, the continuing PL propaganda attacks on him, and the impasse reached in the agreement to redistribute PL and FAR units in various regions of Laos. He also mentioned the difficulty encountered in insuring the withdrawal of the Viet Minh who were now inserting their Lao speaking elements in PL units.

Phoumi also believed that Souvanna was finding himself in an increasingly difficult position because of the conflicting demands of the US, the USSR, and France. Phoumi himself remained suspicious of French intentions in Laos, although he now removed his objections to French crews for ICC helicopters (see item 10 July 1962).

The Government

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(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 79,  
18 Jul 62, 86, 19 Jul 62, 87, 19 Jul 62.

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20 Jul 62      The Government of the Republic of China, in  
announcing the presentation of credentials by  
No. 18      its Ambassador to Laos, noted the presence in  
Vientiane of an envoy from the Peiping government,  
a "'self styled Charge d' Affaires having no  
legal status.'" The Republic of China, the  
announcement continued, would never recognize  
the "'fallacious two-Chinas arrangement.'"

In response to this Chinese declaration,  
Secretary Rusk advised the Ambassadors at Vien-  
tiane and Taipei that, because of the Declaration  
of Laotian Neutrality, Souvanna could not be pre-  
vented from recognizing the Chinese Peoples  
Republic. Since the US believed that diplomatic  
representation by the greatest possible number  
of anti-Communist nations was vital to the future  
neutrality of Laos, the withdrawal of the  
Nationalist Ambassador would be unfortunate.  
Thus, the US would continue to urge the GRC to  
maintain diplomatic ties with Laos. (See  
appendix.)

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 113, to  
Taipei, 74, 26 Jul 62; (U) Msg, Taipei to  
SecState, 84, 21 Jul 62.

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21 Jul 62      Phoumi informed the deputy chief of the US  
Mission that he had been able to manage the  
No. 19      accreditation on 19 July of a Chinese Nationalist  
Ambassador to the new Laotian government in spite  
of objections from the Souvanna faction. Phoumi  
also requested

also requested explicit US instructions concerning the accreditation of several Bloc diplomatic representatives in Laos, claiming that he could easily delay the establishment of diplomatic relations with Red China, North Viet Nam, and East Germany.

In commenting upon Phoumi's request for instructions, the Secretary of State agreed with Ambassador Unger that Phoumi should be advised to refrain from vetoing applications for recognition submitted by Sino-Soviet Bloc nations. Instead, Phoumi should be encouraged to support the application already submitted by the Republic of South Korea and to take actions, short of veto, that would prevent the severing of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Federal Republic of Germany, South Viet Nam, or the Republic of China. (See item 30 July 1962 and appendix.)

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, Airgram A-5, 10 Aug 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 110, 23 Jul 62; SecState to Vientiane, 114, 27 Jul 62.

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23 Jul 62 CHMAAG Laos reported that Ambassador Unger had instructed him to contact the senior French officer in Laos and to make himself available for any briefings that might assist the French Military Mission in taking over the duties of the MAAG.

No. 20

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(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 249645, 240156Z Jul 62.

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The Geneva

23 Jul 62      The Geneva Conference concluded when the participating governments, including South Viet Nam and  
No. 21      Thailand, signed a Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and a Protocol to the Declaration.

By the terms of the Declaration of Neutrality the Royal Government of Laos declared that it would:

1) develop friendly contacts and establish diplomatic relations with all countries, especially its neighbors;

2) refrain from the use, or threatened use, of force and from the interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

3) refrain from entering into any military alliance or into an alliance inconsistent with its neutrality;

4) prevent any foreign country from using Laotian territory for military purposes or as a base for the interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

5) refuse to recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition including SEATO;

6) prevent any foreign interference in Laotian internal affairs;

7) accept direct and unconditional aid from all countries;

8) abrogate all treaties and agreements which were inconsistent with the principles of the Geneva Agreements;

9) incorporate the Neutrality Declaration into the Laotian constitution.

The other signatories (Burma, UK, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, North Viet Nam, France, India,

India, Republic of South Viet Nam, Thailand, USSR, and the US) agreed to refrain from taking any action which would give rise to a violation of the principles stated in the Neutrality Declaration, and in the event of a threat of such violation to consult jointly with Laos to consider those measures which might be necessary to ensure the observance of these principles.

The Protocol to the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos stipulated that:

1) all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Laos as soon as possible and within a maximum of thirty days after the ICC inspection teams were present at checkpoints determined by the RLG and the Commission. [Deadline for the withdrawal was 7 October, for an additional 45 days was allowed for the establishment of checkpoints. Thus, the period during which the withdrawal would take place was 75 days.] Exception to this was made for a limited number of French military instructors who were permitted to remain for a limited time at the request of the RLG;

2) the introduction of foreign military personnel, except as noted in previous paragraph, was prohibited;

3) note was taken that the French and Laotian Governments would make arrangements for the transfer of French military installations in Laos to the Laotian Government;

4) the introduction into Laos of armaments in excess of quantities which the RLG considered necessary for the national defense was prohibited;

5) all

5) all prisoners taken during the course of hostilities in Laos were to be released within thirty days and handed over by the RLG to the countries of which they were nationals;

6) the Commission would report violations of the Protocol and any other important information which might assist the Co-Chairmen in carrying out their functions. The Co-Chairmen might at any time make recommendations to the Commission in the nature of general guidance. The Co-Chairmen were to exercise supervision over the observance of Protocol and the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos, and would keep the members of the Conference "constantly" informed;

7) the Commission would, with the concurrence of the RLG, supervise and control the cease-fire in Laos. It was understood that responsibility for the execution of the cease-fire rested with the three Laotian factions and with the RLG after its formation;

8) the Commission was to supervise and control the withdrawal of foreign military personnel;

9) The Commission would investigate cases where the introduction of foreign troops was suspected and would assist the RLG at its request, in cases where the RLG believed that excessive armaments had been brought into Laos;

10) it was understood that the RLG would render the Commission all possible assistance in the performance of its functions;

11) decisions of the Commission on questions relating to the withdrawal of foreign military personnel,

personnel, the introduction of foreign troops or excessive armaments, violations of the cease-fire, conclusions on major questions sent to the Co-Chairmen, and all recommendations by the Commission, required a unanimous vote by the members of the Conference for adoption. On other questions, including those relating to the initiation and carrying out of investigations, the decisions of the Commission could be adopted by majority vote;

12) decisions on initiating and carrying out investigations could be reached in the Commission by majority vote. The Commission was to submit reports on its investigations which, when necessary, might contain minority reports. The Commission would, when necessary, set up inspection teams on which the three member-states were to be equally represented;

13) each of the Governments represented on the Commission was to pay the expenses of its representatives. Provision for the accommodation of the Commission would be the responsibility of the RLG. All other expenses would be met by contributions from the members of the Conference;

14) the Co-Chairmen would, upon request of the Laotian Government, or at the end of three years, submit to the members of the Conference a report, with recommendations, on the question of the termination of the Commission. Before making this report the Co-Chairmen would consult with the RLG.

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Dept. of State Bulletin, Vol. XLVII, (13 August 1962), pp. 259-263.

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During

26 Jul 62      During a Secretary of Defense conference on  
23 July, no decisions were reached regarding  
No. 22      the future of Laos. The American military advisers in South Viet Nam, however, were directed to provide, during the next 70 days, all possible information on Viet Nam and Pathet Lao activities "in order to assist in conclusions as to what should be done with MAAG Laos."

In addition, the Secretary of Defense called upon the Thailand Country Team to reappraise Thai force structures and equipment programs to determine if the proper balance was being struck between military and paramilitary forces. With respect to Thailand, the Secretary also called for: 1) proposals dealing with the rotation of US forces to Thailand for training every two or three months; 2) recommendations, in view of SEATO implications, concerning the withdrawal of the 478th Tactical Fighter Squadron (which was rotated early in September to CONUS); and 3) views on logistical matters.

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(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5455, 262318Z Jul 62.

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26-28  
Jul 62      During a series of conversations with the  
Canadian ICC representative, Ambassador Unger  
No. 23      discussed the ways in which the control commission might ascertain that Viet Minh contingents actually were being withdrawn from Laos. Although the Canadian agreed that the ICC could not operate unless it was permitted access to all parts of Laos, he believed that Souvanna could be persuaded  
to exert



to exert pressure on Souphanouvong to allow ICC teams to visit those areas controlled by the Pathet Lao. Should Souphanouvong agree, the Canadian would seek the establishment of ICC checkpoints at Tchepone, Nape, Xieng Khouang, Phong Saly or Nam Tha, and possibly at both Sam Neua and Col de Mu Gia. These posts were considered adequate to the task of supervising both aerial and overland routes of evacuation.

On 28 July, the Canadian ICC commissioner informed Unger that the Polish representative had indicated that the control commission might be permitted to supervise the withdrawal of Viet Minh technicians from the Xieng Khouang area. Unger, who considered this report encouraging, warned, however, that the establishment of one or two checkpoints would not guarantee adequate supervision of the Viet Minh withdrawal. The ICC should therefore continue to seek access to other areas of Laos.

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(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 124, 26 Jul 62; 131, 27 Jul 62. (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 136, 28 Jul 62.

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30 Jul 62 Prime Minister Souvanna and Foreign Minister Quinim arrived in Washington for talks with  
No. 24 President Kennedy, the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Defense, and other US officials concerning Lao problems, future policies, and courses of action. In particular they discussed Lao troop integration and demobilization, the role of the ICC--which Souvanna promised to use in accordance with the Geneva Agreements--the  
release

release of US and Filipino prisoners, the internal political situation in Laos, and Souvanna's plan to form a single neutral Lao political party, US economic aid, and the Lao-Thai improvement of relations. The only commitment made by the US during this series of talks was a pledge to withdraw US forces from Laos in accordance with the Geneva Agreements (see item 23 July 1962).

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(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 123, 30 Jul 62; (C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 119, 27 Jul 62, 133, and 134, 1 Aug 62, 157, 7 Aug 62. (LOU) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 131, 1 Aug 62, (U) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 147, 3 Aug 62.

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30 Jul 62      In further conversation on the problems facing  
the new Lao government (see items 19-20 and 21  
No. 25      July 1962), Ambassador Unger and Phoumi agreed  
that until the pending Council of Ministers'  
meeting nothing could be done to prevent Souph-  
nouvong from encouraging the establishment of  
Bloc diplomatic missions in Vientiane. They also  
agreed that Phoumi had to cooperate closely with  
the French and accept the ICC in those areas  
under his control, so that similar demands  
for cooperation might be made to the PL.

Phoumi told Unger that a commission to  
execute the Geneva Agreements in Laos, particularly  
the cease-fire agreement and the provisions for  
the withdrawal of foreign troops, had been established  
by the new government. He admitted, however, that  
the subordinate body charged with establishing  
and enforcing the cease-fire had so far failed  
to reach

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to reach agreement in regard to the continued fighting among isolated units behind the general cease-fire line.

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(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 142,  
30 Jul 62.

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31 Jul 62

No. 26

Using the sources available to it, the Laos Country Team estimated that one 300-400-man Viet Minh unit had been withdrawn from Laos. More than 12,000 Viet Minh troops and some 2,400 advisers remained in the kingdom. The Country Team cautioned, however, that there was "no overt US intelligence capability in areas of Viet Minh presence." The various agencies of the Country Team were thus dependent upon secondary sources, such as unverified FAR reports, and could not be completely certain of the degree of Viet Minh compliance with the Geneva Agreements.

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(S) Msg, AmEmbassy Vientiane to DEPTAR,  
DA IN 231906, 311205Z Jul 62.

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